THE TEMPLE OF SHAMANIC WITCHCRAFT

SHADOWS, SPIRITS AND THE HEALING JOURNEY



CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

About the Author

Christopher Penczak is an award-winning author, teacher, healing practitioner, and eclectic witch. His practice draws upon the foundation of modern witchcraft blended with the wisdom of mystical traditions from across the globe. He has studied extensively with witches, mystics, and healers in various traditions to synthesize his own practice of witchcraft and healing. He is an ordained minister, herbalist, flower essence consultant, and certified Reiki Master (Teacher) in the Usui-Tibetan and Shamballa traditions. He is the author of several books, including *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft, City Magick, Gay Witchcraft*, and *Magick of Reiki*.

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CHRISTOPHER PENCZAK

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To my husband, Steve, my parents, Ron and Rosalie,
and all my spirit allies, guides, and teachers.

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I am the greenest of plants;
I am the wild boar;
I am a salmon in the river;
I am a lake on the plain;
I am the word of knowledge;
I am the point of a spear;
I am the lure beyond the ends of the earth;
I can shift my shape like a god.
—The "Song of Amergin," *The Book of Invasions*

Introduction

What Is the Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft?

After learning what most consider to be traditional witchcraft—meditation, circle casting, spell work, and the Wheel of the Year—I hit a block. Although these skills are really limitless, I found I had reached a personal plateau and couldn't go any further. I didn't know what I was missing, but I knew I was missing something, and that piece was vital to me. I had a lot of unresolved issues. My initial training in the craft was very healing, bringing up many issues to be transformed, but I still had far to go. I still had a lot of anger, guilt, and shame with me and needed to go deeper. I just didn't know what to do next.

I guess you could say I got a little bored with witchcraft. I felt a need to explore other forms of mysticism, particularly shamanism. I was drawn to their traditions of healing both body and spirit. Perhaps they would have what I needed. Through this exploration, I felt a little sad that I was leaving witchcraft, and a bit guilty that I was somehow betraying the practice that meant so much to me. My fellow witches reminded me that guilt has nothing to do with our craft and I am free to explore anything with the Goddess' blessing. So I did.

First I found myself studying the rituals and lore of the Native American tribes. Though I was initially drawn to this, I felt like I was trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. Certain things resonated with me, as if I had found a strand of my personal truth, but the whole tradition, the whole tapestry, didn't fit me. Though I love and respect them, Native American traditions didn't touch me the way witchcraft did, so I kept looking.

I continued to explore the fringes of tribal belief, from talking with experienced elders and practitioners in Native traditions to attending more New Age weekend workshops on shamanic technique. I explored Celtic shamanism and Norse shamanism. I looked to the spiritual practices of Central and South America and to the wise ones of Hawaii, with the traditions of Huna. Each experience, workshop, and book held something valuable for me, but nothing

was completely right. Something was still missing.

All of these shamanic healing techniques held a primal power. Their power released much of what I had repressed. The release of energy was very healing, if not very pleasant. My anger came up in waves. My depression swelled up and threatened to swallow me whole. I had evoked the shadow self, the sum of my repressed feelings and energies. As horrible as it was, it forced me to acknowledge, and actually work with these feelings, rather than lock them away in the depths of my soul. If I didn't like what I saw in the mirror, it was my job to transform my shadow. I learned to take responsibility for my own feelings. Through a combination of my traditional magick and my newly found shamanic wisdom, I was able to do just that, and like a caterpillar to cocoon, I eventually emerged as a new butterfly, feeling like a new person. I journeyed to the Underworld and came back reborn.

When the process reached a conclusion, I found myself more aware than I had ever been before. I was happier, healthier, and more honest with myself. I found myself on a new plateau where I was more peaceful and truly felt the connection between all things. I hadn't destroyed the shadow, but learned how to integrate and partner with it. Love, not destruction, was the key to healing the shadow. The whole experience was amazing, a trial of strength, a personal initiation very different from anything I had previously experienced.

During this period of exploration and healing, I didn't abandon my craft. I still kept up with my traditional rituals and meditation. I continued doing magick, often for self-healing and to bring gentleness to the process. I celebrated the Moons and holidays. I continued to meditate, use tarot, and speak with my spirit guides. I realized that the wide range of shamanic techniques I learned didn't provide me with a cohesive system. I didn't resonate with any particular cultural tradition, but looked for the truths common to all of these traditions. I had to find my own process, and I found witchcraft to be the anchor in my healing journey. The ways of the witch became my cultural foundation stone.

I found my missing piece! The elusive secret was to restore the shamanic traditions to my witchcraft practice. The techniques common to all the world's healing traditions—journey, spirit partnership, and energy healing—are also a common part of the craft. By stepping outside of my safety zone, I found myself right back in the Goddess' arms.

One of the first definitions I learned of a witch was a "walker between the

worlds." But other than casting a magick circle that stands "between the worlds," few witches developed that aspect of the craft. What we call witchcraft and shamanism today are not mutually exclusive, and most likely come from a common root, from a time before we had such divisions and words. They have far more in common than most people suspect. When you strip the cultures away, at the core they seem much the same to me.

Unfortunately, in the initial revival of modern witchcraft, many leaned heavily upon the world of ceremonial magick and were less aware of the shamanic mysteries. The ceremonial magick was preserved in our ancient and medieval texts and manuscripts, while the shamanic and folk practices were nearly lost during the Burning Times. The shamanic roots can be glimpsed in our myths and rituals. They are encoded in traditional initiations and modern path workings, but few witches explore them further.

Thankfully this is now changing. Many modern witches are walking both roads, learning to reconcile the differences and draw upon the similarities to create the new traditions of the next century, by fully honoring the old. By looking to the surviving native traditions, we can find many missing elements of European mysticism to restore shamanic practices to witchcraft. We are expanding beyond folk magick and circle ritual to truly become walkers in both worlds, and learn to be a bridge, a partner between the realm of spirit and the realm of form. When I look at modern pagan festivals, I see a lot in common with Native American gatherings.

Since my initial healing, I have repeatedly brought up aspects of the shadow to face. Healing is like peeling the layers of an onion. There are always more layers to explore. I have helped others distill their shadow self and learn to partner with it. From this past experience, I have organized the most helpful techniques into my third-degree course and The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft book and CD companion. The process creates a sacred space within your life, a spiritual temple in both the inner world and the outer world, the worlds of the shaman. The temple is not a physical place, a sacred site to visit, but a sacred site you find within yourself and bring out into your world through your actions. It is a temple of healing where you will contact your shadow, your inner darkness, and learn to make peace with it.

The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft is the third in a series of books. The

first was *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* and the second, *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft*. Both deal with more traditional training in modern witchcraft, from meditation and psychic development to traditional ritual and spell casting. They are wonderful foundations to begin with if witchcraft is new to you.

The inner temple deals with the element of fire as embodied by light, guidance, and protection. It helps you light your inner fire. The outer temple is the element of earth, helping you manifest your inner sacredness in the outer world through ritual and spellcraft, partnering with nature and the elements. *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft* is based on the element of water, the realm of emotion, reflection, and healing.

Shamanism deals with piercing the veil between spirit and matter, and the element of water is often concerned with the realm of spirit and the ancestors. Water is traditionally the element of the west, the land of the setting sun, the Underworld, and the ancestors. Water is the element of boundary, both physical boundaries and emotional ones. Rivers, streams, and oceans mark borders and territories, as well as borders into the spirit realm. The surface of the water is like the veil itself.

Water is reflective and psychic, urging us like a magick mirror to look at our true self, and to see what is beyond the surface. Psychic ability, intuition, and inner vision, reflected on the water's surface, are the double-edged blessings of water. Through it, we learn greater mastery of our personal empathy and psychic ability. Water is about emotional energy, and on its highest level, it is the unconditional love of the gods, the divine love in the Holy Grail of Immortality that nourishes, restores, and transforms. It's not timid love, but a fierce, powerful, changing love. It is the love of life. Once we drink from this water, we are never the same again.

Though it is the third in a series of five books, each one training in an element, *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft* is complete in itself. Only the necessary techniques from the previous two books will be reviewed here. If more information is provided in a previous text, *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* will be referred to as *ITOW* and *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft* as *OTOW*, along with an appropriate chapter or exercise number.

Like the previous two books, this one is divided into a year-and-a-day course of training. It starts with four preliminary chapters to expose you to the basic concepts, history, terminology, and skills that will be needed for your year-and-

a-day journey. Make sure this is a path you wish to walk, because once you start, it is much like entering the cocoon. For your overall health and wellness, you should see the process through to its conclusion. To stop the process before it is complete can be traumatic.

The four initial chapters are followed by twelve formal lessons and a thirteenth lesson/ritual for self-initiation into the art of the shamanic witch, culminating in an act of healing, rebirth, and transformation. In truth, shamanic knowledge is not linear, but this outline gives you the basic techniques and information to find your own inner guides and spiritual allies who will give you the lessons in the way that is most perfect for you. The true learning occurs on the other side of the veil, through building relationships with your spiritual allies and teachers. The lessons gradually build in skill level, knowledge, and difficulty. You can do a lesson roughly once a month and prepare for the final ritual on the last day, once you have reflected on the path.

As I look back on this journey, part of me wishes I could give you a complete, unbroken tradition of shamanic witchcraft, wishing someone could have trained me in it. I wish I could be sharing the words, sounds, and steps used in the ancient past. I envision a time of primal tribal witchcraft, powerful and explosive, the distant relative to our more formal rituals and circles. Due to fear, superstition, and persecution, most of our traditions are not unbroken. They are found in the remnants of the past. We pluck from them bits of myth, folklore, and living memory. We can re-forge them from fragments of our past, and from looking to the wisdom of our sisters and brothers across the globe.

Another part of me is glad we come from a fractured tradition, because in that pain comes great opportunity for healing, which is the true role of the witch. Many from seemingly unbroken traditions of mysticism often have an air of aloofness or superiority, feeling that history gives credibility. I don't have that same history or that luxury.

In my search for practical roots in the history of witchcraft, I've been forced to study the knowledge of the world, and recognize the wisdom of strange lands and strange people. It has broadened my view of witchcraft, feeling that anywhere the Mother and Father are honored, anywhere the cycles are honored and both spirits and nature are partners, you find witchcraft. In looking beyond what I was told was witchcraft, I found the craft of the wise all around

me, in every land and time, sometimes hidden and sometimes overt. The search has given me a broad history, a world history. I found a global family to whom I could relate, and many strands to weave my own truth together.

Some would look at this as yet another New Age shamanism book, feeling that it's not a true tradition, but something cobbled together by a modern person. Though they would mean it derogatorily, this is a New Age shamanism book! It brings the shamanic techniques into the next age—an age of equality and healing for all who seek it. This particular path is seen through the eyes of a modern witch, but the techniques themselves are eternal and timeless. Any tradition that doesn't adapt and change with the times, to bring its wisdom to the next generation, will eventually lose touch and meaning with those it seeks to help.

In the end, when I think about *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft* and the blessings of the element of water, I think of the words Perfect Love and Perfect Trust. The magick of elemental water is the most perfect, unconditional love. It is the power of guidance, healing, and transformation. But before we can really have it for others and the world, we must start by loving ourselves. Only then can we have Perfect Love and Perfect Trust for all.

Be Well,

Christopher Penczak

[contents]

1

Witchcraft and Shamanism

To most people, witchcraft and shamanism appear to be two distinct and separate disciplines. The general public associates shamanism with the holy healing people of native tribes, while they associate witches with spells, potions, Halloween, and, due to popular misconceptions, evil. The two seem worlds apart, but in reality, they come from a very similar root.

What Is a Shaman?

The word shaman, or saman, is Tungus in origin, coming from the Ural-Altaic tribal people of Siberia. Related to the Tungus word *sa,* which translates as “to know,” the Siberian people use the word saman to refer to men and women who act as the spiritual healers and wise ones of the tribe. They are the ones who know the mysteries of spirit. The word shaman is properly used to refer to the spirit healers of those tribes who share a similar genetic origin to those of Siberia. It is usually used in reference to the healers of the North and South American tribes, but culturally and linguistically it can be used throughout Eurasia.

The role of the shaman applies to both men and women, though culturally one gender can be more prevalent than the other. Few refer to female shamans with a different word, such as shamaness. Sexual orientation and gender identity does not preclude one from shamanism either. In many traditions, shamans dress in the clothes of the opposite gender or practice homosexuality.

For anthropologists exploring the spiritualities of tribal societies, the word shaman is an easier and safer term than the words witch, wizard, sorcerer, magician, and seer, even though these labels were used in the past to describe the tribal shaman’s European counterparts. For those from a Western mainstream academic background, shaman has less negative baggage than these other highly charged terms.

In an effort to be more precise, some anthropologists and mystical students use the term core shamanism to differentiate the use of shamanic techniques and ideas from traditional Siberian or Native shamanism. Although it is not a religion, shamanism has a definitive set of core practices that sets it apart from other traditions of magick, yet it can be found worldwide, particularly in tribal cultures, and in the foundations of visionary traditions. Not all mystics can be referred to as shamanistic in the truest sense of the word.

Core concepts to the practice of shamanism include the following:

- The ability to enter an altered state of consciousness through the use of sound, rhythm, movement, and plants.
- The experience of one or more nonphysical realities that are just as "real" to the practitioner as the physical world, and of actions in the nonphysical worlds that directly affect the physical world.
- The use of an altered state, a trance sometimes defined as an ecstasy, to project self-awareness from the physical world to the nonphysical worlds.
- Dealings with nonphysical beings, or spirits, who enter into a relationship with the practitioner. They offer guidance, healing, or power used to create change in the physical world.

Other mystics may have the same gifts and abilities but do not access them through ecstatic trance or working with the spirits. Though they can be gifted medicine people or spell casters, without that link to the spirit world they are not necessarily shamans. The voluntary interface with the unseen and the ability to use this link to create change is what sets a shaman apart from other magi. Shamans are typically equated with the title of "medicine person," though not all medicine men and women use shamanic techniques to effect healing.

Humanity seems to be hard-wired with a few common ways to interface with the spirit world. These interfaces are a natural part of our physical and spiritual makeup. Wise ones across the globe separately discovered and applied these techniques and then applied their own cultural beliefs and rituals to them. These techniques have survived because they work. Archaeological evidence indicates that shamanic practice is at least 20,000 years old, making it truly the oldest profession. The recognition of core shamanic techniques in the lands beyond Siberia and the Americas has led to the somewhat controversial use of

terms such as Celtic Shamanism and Norse Shamanism, applying a cultural adjective to the shamanic practice.

Practitioners of these other cultural traditions sometimes resent the label of shamanism. The word shaman, being from Siberia, was never used by the ancestors of the Celts, Norse, or any other Europeans. A Celtic practitioner once asked me why we don't say Siberian Druidism or Asian Druidism, and in a way he had a point. Through this anthropological choice, shamanism became a default term recognizable to all.

This practice of using the word shaman as a generic label has led to a bit of confusion and some difficult feelings. Those involved in the Native tribes feel that culturally it is their word and resent it being used as a generic label or default term. Modern pagans, sharing a similar spiritual history with tribal communities, should be sensitive to these feelings and make an effort to create bridges of understanding. As you study these techniques, it is important to remember that although there are great similarities between the healing practices of many cultures, there are also great differences in thought, philosophy, and interpretation. Such differences must be respected.

When I first started on my shamanic path, I attended a lecture in the Boston area by a scholarly and experienced Celtic practitioner of the Underworld traditions, visiting from the United Kingdom. He insisted, and made quite a convincing case, that there is no such thing as Celtic shamanism. In his opinion, people who use the term are careless, sloppy scholars and need to be better educated. The very next week, I attended another lecture by a Harvard scholar and practicing Celtic shaman who outlined the reasons why someone would call her practice shamanism. She, too, was quite convincing. I realized then that if the professional experts can't agree, then perhaps there is no one right answer. I use the term shamanism myself because it's practical when teaching and I truly feel called to the word. I like its meaning, history, and associations. The practice of core shamanism, and how it relates to the traditions of witchcraft, is a primary focus of my own work.

Stone Age Witchcraft

When I teach workshops on core shamanism, during the introductions I hear stories of students who, like me, are of European descent. They tell me how

they sought out spirituality in Native American traditions, going to drumming circles and sweat lodges, and how they are saddened that their own culture only has rigid, dogmatic institutions and not personal spiritual traditions. They ask me, “Why don’t we have our own shamans? Why didn’t we carry on these traditions?” We did. Our shamans were called witches.

When I trace back the history of witchcraft and paganism, I find my oldest spiritual ancestors in the Stone Age. During the Stone Age, we have evidence of Goddess-reverent cultures. In these seemingly primitive cultures, there is evidence of ritual and ceremony. We had a people directly dependent upon nature for survival. They learned to partner with the environment around them to prosper. They honored the earth as Mother Goddess, and perhaps the grain, sun, or animals as Father God. They believed in the innate magick, divinity, and spirit in all things. They worked with these spirits to create change, ranging from a successful hunt to rainstorms.

In these tribes were people who acted as spiritual guides. They had a deeper sense of connection with the spirit world and psychic ability. They could partner with the spirits and gods to receive information from the unseen lands that would help the tribe. Most likely many of these wise ones were women, since in the hunter-gatherer societies, the females were protected because of their ability to bring life into the tribe, while one man could father many children. The older men and the injured hunters with spiritual ability would join these women, offering their gifts and guidance to the tribes. This started the archetypal image of the female witch, the wise old wizard, and the wounded healer. They were the first shamans.

As these lands developed into an agrarian society, many of these wise ones gathered to form the first temples and became the first priestesses and priests of society. They used the tools of the new society, such as writing and formal ritual items, in their crafts. Eventually these mystics created the high arts of ceremonial magick and worship. We find these priestesses and priests influencing the rulers of the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Egypt as those cultures grew into their classical empires.

Some wise ones chose to stay on the fringes of society, without formal temples. They continued on their primal paths to power. They did not have formal schools of training, but kept their teaching personal and individual. They kept the ways of the herbs and medicines. They were in closer contact to

untouched nature, the elements and the animals, and continued their relationship with all to better serve those in need. The newly evolving urbanites were more likely to go to the formal temples, while the rural peasants sought help from the simple wise woman or man.

Thus the traditions remained, as empires grew and crumbled. Migrations of many tribes from the East, those of the Celts and Teutons, stretched out across Europe, absorbing the culture, myths, and magick of the indigenous people of Europe, those who had erected the mounds, henges, and standing stones. When you go back to the Stone Age root of all these spiritual and magickal traditions, all evidence points to the core shamanic techniques as a common origin from which the others sprang. What we would now call the forms of European shamanism survived and flourished in many lands, changing with the times. From the Stone Age medicine woman to the image of the medieval witch, the role was one of healing, herbcraft, and midwifery, acting as a bridge between the worlds.

It wasn't until the rise of Christianity that Europe's magickal and shamanic traditions came under heavy fire. Intimately linked with what we now consider the pagan religions of old, practitioners of the magickal arts, those who partnered with the spiritual forces of worlds seen and unseen, became targets of fear and persecution. The old gods were called demons, and those who honored them became agents of evil in the minds of Church elders. We did have shamans in the form of witches, and we, as a culture, wiped most of them out and sent the rest underground. As logic, science, and technology replaced the old forms of mysticism, witches were cast into the land of fairy tales and make-believe, no longer taken seriously.

Those of European descent lost a rich shamanic history and tradition due to the persecutions of the Burning Times. Because of the propaganda that was spread, we don't even recognize the remnants of our heritage, though you can catch distorted glimpses of it in the witch-hunt trial transcripts. Though some magickal practices were preserved as folk wisdom and family secrets, others were resurrected through mythology and written lore.

The Surviving Traditions and Tribes

If our European traditions are broken lines of wisdom, where do we go to find

the missing pieces of our past? In my search, I looked to the surviving tribal people. Unlike the Europeans, the surviving tribal people of the Americas did not turn on their own healers and mystics. The native magick was only in danger after the European invasions and subsequent missionary drives to convert the native population to Christianity by fear and force. This form of spirituality, although threatened, has survived relatively intact in the modern era. Even the anthropologists' research records tribal ways and makes information more widely available. When I think of most primal forms of shamanic witchcraft in Stone Age Europe, I think their way of life, and general belief system, isn't too far from those keeping the tribal ways now. Modern tribes provide a template for modern witches to reclaim our shamanic ancestry.

As modern witches seek to reintroduce elements of shamanism into witchcraft, we look not only to the traditions in the New World, but also to the practices of surviving traditions of European shamanism. Some are tidbits of folk wisdom from the families of seers brought to light by contemporary scholars. Others are reconstructions of this wisdom based on the old mythologies and intuitive experimentation. Folk magick and reconstructionist traditions are the surviving branches of our older forms of European magick.

Although these cultures, both of the Old World and the New World, influence modern Wicca today, few Wiccans see their magickal practices as shamanic in origin. Hopefully, with more time and information, shamanic roots will be incorporated more fully into the practice of witchcraft.

African

African spiritual traditions are diverse in tribe, language, and location, but have many shamanic techniques in common. Most believe that one distant creative force charged a pantheon of lesser beings to regulate creation. The tribal medicine men function as intermediaries between the people and these spirits, as well as the ancestors. They are respected as priests and ministers. Rituals use music, drumming, and dance. Westerners see the influences of African spiritual traditions in the religions of Voodoo, Santeria, Condomblé, and Ifa.

Asian

The Asian spiritual traditions have a strong shamanic foundation, with its influence found in the nature-based spiritual practices of China, Tibet, Japan,

and Korea. Technically, according to the etymology of the word, shamanism most appropriately refers to the practices of those spirit workers in Central Asia and Siberia.

Australian

Although not directly linked to modern traditions of witchcraft, the modern seeker's search for spirituality that led to the exploration of Native American traditions has also led the seeker to explore the traditions of the Australian aboriginals. As diverse as the tribes of the Americas and Africa, the Australian aboriginals share many shamanistic elements. Best known among them is the belief in the Dreamtime and the reverence of animal spirits.

Celtic

Though the true oral traditions of the Druids may have been lost, the mysteries of the Celts have been preserved through the myths and poetry of Celtic tradition. Even though many have been Christianized from their original pagan foundation, you can clearly see the roots of a culture well versed in the spirit world when you read the tales of Ireland regarding the Tuatha de Danaan, the Welsh Mabinogi myth cycle, the classic transformation of Taliesin the Bard, and the prophecies of Merlin. The pagan Celts were a culture that saw the spirit worlds side by side with the material world, and one step could easily take you through the gates of the human world into the realm of the spirits and gods. Proponents of the old faiths claim that Celtic shamanism has survived under the veil of Christianity in folk customs honoring the faery folk, second sight, spiritual healing and the Underworld tradition. Looking to the surviving folklore of the British Isles, I'm inclined to agree.

Central and South American

The ancient empires of the Incans, Mayans, Aztecs, and Toltecs had rich shamanic cultures that survive today in Central and South America with modern practitioners. Although each of these cultures is very different, they all share striking similarities. Mystical healers and those who speak with the spirits are a part of life in these lands. Many consider themselves the guardians of the sacred past. Their magnificent buildings and potentially bloody rituals do not seem like shamanism to the casual observer, yet like the Egyptians and Greeks, their civilization and religion grew out of the guiding mysteries of

shamanic technique. Use of sacred calendars, herbal lore, sacred sites, animal helpers, and spirit work can be found in these surviving traditions despite the encroachment of new religions and technology. In fact, like many African traditions, some have absorbed Christian principles as a way of survival. I've felt a resonance in my own soul when comparing the Aztec and Mayan traditions to my own practice of European-based witchcraft.

Egyptian

With its sophisticated culture and architecture, ancient Egyptian civilization is another culture that doesn't spring to mind as being shamanic, yet shamans have one eye focused on the next world, the ancestors and the afterlife. Egyptian magick was focused on the mysteries of death and the afterlife as well as magick for daily life. One of the most prominent myths of this land is the death and resurrection of the god Osiris. Shamanic initiation journeys all over the world are much like the story of Osiris. In the spirit world, the shaman is confronted with death, horribly mutilated or torn into pieces. The power of magick, sometimes embodied as a goddess, resurrects the shaman, yet leaves him changed somehow, adding or subtracting some element. This rebirth grants the shaman new powers. Osiris was resurrected by his sister-wife, the goddess Isis, yet was missing his phallus, thereby becoming the lord of the dead. He could no longer create life, but gained a new kingdom. Perhaps Osiris was a shamanic god, and the Egyptian dynasties evolved from a more shamanic, tribal culture. The story of Isis and Osiris became the basis of Egyptian mystery schools.

Finnish

The Finnish people also have a full shamanic tradition that is fairly unknown in the modern world. Historically, the Finns were well-known for being a nation of formidable wizards, holding great power and the ability to change the winds and weather with their songs. They are a nomadic people, coming out of Asia, who eventually settled in their current homeland. Linguistically and magickally they have more in common with the ancient traditions of Siberia, Mongolia, and Korea than their European counterparts. Some believe that the Finns may have predated the Celts in the British Isles, influencing Celtic myth and magick. Their shamanic practices continued when the Finns settled in North America, and they were sometimes considered witches in the New World. The word *tietäjä,*

referring to a shaman or wizard, is used in Finnish translations of the Bible to refer to the wise men or magi. Their magick works primarily through the magician's relationship with the spirits of nature and the gods, through trance, drumming, words of power, song, and purification rituals of the sauna. Many of the traditional myths, folklore, and magickal charms were eventually recorded in the Kalevala, a collection of epic folk poems from the oral traditions of Finland and Karelia, first compiled in 1835. It is known as the Finnish National Epic.

Hawaiian

The magickal lore and philosophy of Hawaii is called Huna, meaning "hidden knowledge." Practitioners of Huna are called kahunas, acting as priests, ministers, and sorcerers to their people. Though this tradition was almost wiped out due to the Christianization of the Hawaiian islands, it has been preserved and its lore translated for the modern world. Huna contains a quite detailed form of spiritual psychology and healing. Kahunas have parallels in other Pacific lands, such as the tahuna of Tahiti and the tohunga of New Zealand.

Italian

One of the most interesting legacies of European shamanism comes from an area in Northern Italy known as Friuli, where Italian, Etruscan, Germanic, and Slavic traditions mingled. Although the pagan spiritual practices of Tuscany honored the ancestors and were somewhat shamanic in nature, in Friuli there existed a tradition known as the Benandanti, who practiced an unusual blend of shamanic magick. The Benandanti were an agricultural fertility cult, pagan in origin and possibly related to the Cults of Diana or the myths of the Wild Hunt. Later, Christian beliefs were mingled with their own. When the witch trials of the Burning Times caught up with them, the Benandanti honestly felt they were good Christians, doing Christ's and the Lord's will.

The members of the Benandanti, or "good walkers," were marked at birth by a caul that was preserved as a magickal charm worn around their neck. On the Ember Days, the days just before the equinoxes and solstices, they would be called to service. Some say they were called by drums or summoned by angels. Unlike many magickal orders, the Benandanti were called to gather together only in spirit, going into a deep slumberlike trance and projecting their

spirits to a common meeting ground, the Valley of Josaphat in the center of the world. They would transform, or shapeshift, into animals such as mice, rabbits, cats, and butterflies. There in the valley, as good soldiers, they would fight the forces of malignancy, decay, and corruption, all the things that symbolized a poor harvest or harsh weather.

These forces were embodied as "witches and warlocks" by the later Christian Benandanti. Buying into the Christian propaganda, the witches, or "bad walkers," were different from the Benandanti because they caused illness and harmed children, while the Benandanti protected the harvest, village, and children from the witches. They would fight the "bad walkers" with stalks of fennel, known for its healing powers. If they were successful, the year would be good. If they were defeated, the land would be plagued with problems. They returned to their bodies by the dawn and returned to otherwise normal lives.

To the witch inquisitors, this all sounded too much like a witch's sabbat, though the Benandanti fiercely denied it. The Church did not strongly persecute the Benandanti. To the modern eye, the rites of the Benandanti are very shamanic—drums, festival days, traveling in spirit, acting as sacred warriors of the village, shapechanging, and using the spiritual powers of plants to battle and heal. For more on the little-known Benandanti, look to Carlo Ginzburg's classic work *The Night Battles.*

Mediterranean

To some, the traditions of Greece and Rome are the first that come to mind upon mention of the word paganism or witchcraft. Most people are familiar with the classical gods of Olympus, and with the emphasis on culture, society, and philosophy, most people don't tend to think of the Greco-Roman influence as particularly shamanic until you revisit the myths. When you understand that shamanism is not necessarily a tribal native religion, but a practice of walking between worlds, you can't help but see the parallels of the shaman in classic mythology.

Many Greco-Roman deities have shamanic and magickal characteristics, particularly Hermes, the messenger god. The story of Persephone's transformation from the maiden Kore while in the Underworld of Hades is much like the shamanic initiation of the witch. In fact, some modern witchcraft

traditions reenact the descent of this goddess during initiation rituals and seasonal celebrations. We now believe the initiatory rituals of the Eleusinian Mystery Schools are based on stories of Demeter, Kore, and Hades. The Mystery Schools of Pythagoras, Orpheus, Dionysus, Eleusis, and the imported Persian cults of Mithras could all be considered formalized shamanic rites. The early Greek mystics were certainly influenced by the more primal religions of the northern territories of Thrace and Scythia, known as the land of witches.

Native North American

When discussing shamanism, most people who are unaware of the Siberian origins of the word automatically assume that you're talking about the medicine people of the Native American tribes. Although viewed as a single culture by many, each tribe has its own mythology, rituals, songs, and traditions. As there has been a revival of such religious practices among Native people, some tribes have been willing to open their doors to seekers, usually white men and women, who want to participate and practice the medicine ways. Many people in the modern pagan and New Age movements spend a lifetime searching for their own practices and experiences, and participate in either Native rituals or anglicized forms of Native rituals. They then bring these experiences to their own traditions of witchcraft. Since European witchcraft has lost most of its specific shamanic rituals, modern witches draw upon Native American teachings for inspiration. I know many witches who participate in traditional forms of vision quests, sweat lodges, and tribal dancing, often studying with a Native American teacher.

Norse

Like the Celts, when you look to the myths of the Norse, you will find a rich, complex system of shamanic thought. Their prose, the epics of the Eddas, encode this wisdom much like the Celtic texts. In some ways, Norse mythology outlines the most complete and complex shamanic cosmology of Western Europe, consisting of nine worlds in the three regions of upper, lower, and middle levels. In each world dwell spirits, gods, and creatures that find parallels in other cultures across the globe.

Though many think of Norse magick as strictly the arena of rune magick and divination, the Norse have a long history of shamanic practice and seership, using song, poetry, and shivering and shaking to induce trance. Norse

shamanic practices are sometimes referred to as Seidr. Seidr is associated with the goddess Freya and her priestesses. The cults of the rune master god Odin, or Wotan, are also considered shamanic in nature. Odin used the shamanic techniques of self-sacrifice, piercing his side with a spear, and hanging from the World Tree to learn the mystery of the runes. Initiates of these mysteries possibly reenacted the sacrifices of Odin to gain inspiration, vision, and magickal power.

Siberian

The Siberian traditions of shamanism are possibly some of the oldest forms of shamanism surviving today. Outlawed under Soviet rule, Siberian shamans kept their knowledge and traditions in secret, and are now free to practice again. The origins of the word shaman come from Siberia, and many people theorize that the spread of tribal culture and shamanism to the Americas began with these cultures as groups migrated to other climates. After studying traditional teachings from these lands and speaking with those who have studied with the shamans of Siberia, I find many similarities with all the great traditions, making me wonder if this was one of the first fonts of magickal knowledge. Siberian shamanism weaves together information I have found in North and South American, European, and Far Eastern traditions. I didn't expect to feel so "at home" with Siberian mythology and cosmology. I thought it would be more alien to my Western witchcraft mind, yet I found many correspondences. Like other traditions, those of Siberia emphasize that shamanism is a calling, a vocation, and that one is literally called by the spirits to service.

Slavic

The Slavic traditions of magick and shamanism found in Eastern Europe influenced the cults of the Benandanti in Northern Italy and continued independently on their own for quite some time. Many countries in Eastern Europe were the last to convert fully to Christianity. Knowledge of a diverse pantheon of spirits and deities has survived into modern times. Slavic traditions were very dualistic and had a strong focus on nature spirits and ancestor reverence. Like many cultures, Slavic tribes had a ritual totem animal. The Slavs also believed in a great World Tree with three divisions. A personal tree was seen as a sort of spiritual "telephone" to connect with the ancestors and

other worlds. These traditions have a wheel of yearly celebrations somewhat similar to the modern pagan Wheel of the Year. Their religious orders at all levels are open to both men and women.

The Modern Craft

During the witchcraft renaissance of the twentieth century, many witches planted the seeds of neoshamanism into Wicca. Just as modern paganism is more accurately called neopaganism, or new paganism, referring to the revival of paganism and not a truly unbroken line of practice, modern shamanic practice is sometimes referred to as neo-shamanism. Just because it is a modern practice doesn't mean it is less valid. Modern people need modern traditions, but must pay homage to the past. Though most people would not consider a psychologist who practiced "shamanic counseling" to be an authentic shaman, most modern people would be more likely to experience the blessings of shamanic healing in the context of a psychology session than by visiting the nearest reservation and seeking out a tribal shaman. Many tribal shamans who build bridges to the modern world are versed in Western psychology. The old and the new can complement each other.

To find shamanism in the modern craft, you need only to look at the era of Gerald Gardner, cited as the founder of Wicca, to find his contemporary, Robert Cochrane, who practiced a more shamanic form of witchcraft. When you look at traditional Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca, which stress ceremonial-magick techniques such as casting the circle and calling the quarters, creating group consciousness in a coven, the gender polarity of the Great Rite, and magickal correspondences, the shamanic elements of witchcraft are not apparent. Ceremony and spellcraft are emphasized. But when you look beyond the traditional sources to the remnants of family traditions, you find witchcraft and shamanism intertwined. Cochrane claimed to be a hereditary witch, practicing a form of magick and ritual that was different from Gardner's. Cochrane's craft consisted mainly of silent ritual and meditative journey. These practices were more spontaneous and not performed from a Book of Shadows. From our modern point of view, Cochrane's work seems more shamanic.

Doreen Valiente, Gardner's highly influential high priestess, left Gardner's

group. She later contacted Cochrane and began practicing witchcraft with him. Cochrane detested the publicness of Gardner and might have coined the term “Gardnerian” as a derogatory word against the tradition. Valiente claimed that Cochrane’s tradition was more shamanic than the formal magickal style of Gardner, though Cochrane would probably not have appreciated the shamanic comparison in his life, since to him it would denote something simplistic or primitive and not necessarily the spiritual art he saw as his craft. His teachings helped the influential Valiente move away from the internal political strife that was threatening modern Wicca and into a more personal practice, though she eventually left his coven, the Clan of Tubal Cain, due to his later authoritarian ways and verbal attacks on Gardnerians.

Cochrane and his clan preferred to work outdoors, in three basic settings. The first was on the hilltop, and such works included images of the four-winded castle, relating to mysteries of the Goddess. The second was in a forest glade, working with the energies of the Green and Horned God in a wilder form of nature magick. Last were the mysteries of the cave and cauldron, dedicated to the triple goddess and the power of destiny. The ritual tools used were slightly different than what is now common in modern witchcraft, including an emphasis on the stang, or a forked staff. Altars were built around the stang itself. Other prominent tools included the cauldron, cup, knife, cord, and stone. Cochrane taught various types of spiritual vision, and his theology included specific information on the soul. The group structure consisted of a “clan.” Though the rituals of this tradition may not be as formalized as those of other traditions, the symbolism does indicate a sophisticated form of magickal practice and theory.

Many believe Robert Cochrane was one of the true hereditary witches with a formal tradition and not just smatterings of folk magick. He hinted as much in his private, personal letters. His practices and ideas varied greatly enough from the better-known forms of Wicca to demonstrate another living branch of the craft different from Gardner or Alex Sanders. Alexandrian Wicca, founded by Alex Sanders, has many parallels to Gardnerian Wicca, differentiating both from Cochrane’s teachings.

Unfortunately, as with many of our modern founders of Wicca, such as Gardner and Sanders, controversy surrounded Cochrane, putting his teachings into doubt. He first claimed to be taught by his maternal great uncle, and then

later by his mother. Some skeptics claim he was initiated as a Gardnerian witch and later refuted the teachings, created his own tradition, and claimed a hereditary practice like many witches looking for authenticity in a greatly reconstructed tradition. Though Cochrane was very charismatic, he practiced a form of verbal power play, which he called “grey magic,” to baffle those he met, to prevent them from forming a clear opinion of him. This practice wasn’t harmful, but simply confusing and meant to keep people off balance. Some thought Cochrane taught through puzzle and riddle, like an Asian scholar giving his students a paradoxical parable to contemplate and decipher. Perhaps this grey magick is what confused people.

Cochrane’s best-known controversy involved a plate stamped with “1734” on it. He gave it great mystical significance, claiming the plate had been passed down in his family for over a hundred years. Doreen Valiente later made it publicly known that she had purchased the copper plate for Cochrane to use to carry sabbat cakes at ritual. It is difficult to tell what was a whimsical joke and what was an outright lie for greater attention. Though much of Cochrane’s material is historically plausible, because of such fabrications, much of his work is suspect.

Cochrane died in 1966 from an overdose of belladonna leaves. During a visit with friend and former covenmate Evan Jones, Cochrane said his fate was in “the lap of the Goddess.” That night he was found in his garden by his neighbor. He was taken to the hospital and died three days later from the poison. Much speculation surrounds his death. It is usually thought of as a suicide or an accidental death in a visionary ritual gone awry. Some witches think he was the willing sacrifice of a summer solstice ritual, as an embodiment of the sacrificed God. Cochrane’s work continued onward after his death. His traditions were expanded and made their way to the United States as one of the lesser-known traditions of witchcraft, but still influencing the neoshamanic and witchcraft revival.

While in the Americas during the early 1960s, Carlos Castaneda was beginning his adventure from anthropology student to practitioner of the indigenous shamanism of Mexico. He reportedly met an old Yaqui Indian named Juan Matis who took him on as an apprentice. Juan Matis was called a sorcerer, and in this Toltec tradition, sorcerer was equated with our concept of

the shaman. Castaneda wrote many books on his experiences, though the veracity of his works has come into question. He published *The Teachings of Don Juan* in 1968. Some believe Juan Matis to be a fictional character and literary vehicle to propel Castaneda's own beliefs. Castaneda's work was one of the first to bring the concepts of ordinary and nonordinary states of reality to the popular Western consciousness. Though his books did not emphasize the healing aspects of shamanism as much as the warrior aspects, they did serve to introduce the paradigms of shamanism and magick as a noble practice, rather than a fearful or demonic art, to the modern reader. It sparked the imagination of regular people seeking a new spiritual practice of experience to replace the old ones of pure faith and dogma.

Also in the early 1960s, anthropologist Michael Harner began a study of the tribes in South America and experienced a shamanic initiation, inspiring his research into the healing spiritual practices of those tribes and how those in the modern world can be a part of shamanic healing. From his life-changing experience he created the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Through the foundation and his book *The Way of the Shaman,* he introduced both the concepts and the practice of core shamanic techniques to many in the Western world, paralleling the work of Castaneda, yet very different in approach because the focus was on healing. He made the practice of shamanism accessible and available to people of many different faiths and traditions, including those involved in modern paganism.

Selena Fox, high priestess of Circle Sanctuary near Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin, began a tradition generally known as Wiccan Shamanism. The practice blends more traditional elements of Wicca, such as the magick circle and the Wheel of the Year, with elements of African and Native American tribal groups, including drumming, rattling, and ecstatic dance. Healing, spirit work, and ancestor reverence are primary focuses, and initiation experiences are conducted through solitary vigil. Though Wiccan Shamanism is traditionally associated with Fox, other groups have fused shamanic practices to Wicca, and have created common terms such as shamanic Wicca or shamanic witchcraft for their practice, with no direct ties to Fox.

Victor Anderson is a cofounder of the Feri (sometimes spelled Faery) tradition of witchcraft. While in Oregon, at age nine, Anderson was reportedly initiated into a tradition of witchcraft by a group who called themselves faeries.

During the ceremony, an old naked woman sat in the center of the circle. She was surrounded by brass bowls filled with herbs. Anderson removed his clothes and was sexually initiated by her. Although he was nearly blind due to a medical condition, he experienced a vision of the old woman becoming the Goddess, and then they were joined by a vision of the Horned God, crowned in blue flame. The god was powerful yet effeminate, with an erect penis, and spoke to him. Once the communication with these deities was complete, the vision disappeared, and he returned to the circle with the old woman. She taught him about the herbs around her, and washed him in butter, oil, and salt. Through this ritual, he had a very shamanic experience.

Anderson later worked in a coven and eventually married a woman named Cora who practiced with him. A family friend, who was renamed Gwydion Pendderwen, was initiated by the Andersons, and with inspiration from an Alexandrian Book of Shadows, they created the formal rituals of the Faery Tradition, later renamed Feri. As the Feri tradition grew and evolved, aspects of Hawaiian and African spirituality were incorporated. Much of the Feri tradition remains a mystery to the public as little has been published on the subject. Since then, many traditions of witchcraft have evolved claiming kinship or partnership with the various spirits referred to as faeries. Names such as faery Wicca and faery witchcraft are now common, but not directly related to the Andersons' tradition.

Starhawk, author of the highly influential book *The Spiral Dance* (1979), was initiated into the Feri tradition by Anderson, and it greatly impacted her own work and path. She is a founder of the Reclaiming, a feminist collective group based in the San Francisco area, and is also a political activist. In the revised tenth-anniversary edition of *The Spiral Dance,* Starhawk compared the modern pagan movement to more shamanic cultures. She considers witchcraft fundamentally a shamanic religion because of the emphasis on healing, otherworldly contact, and raising energy.

The husband and wife team of John and Caitlín Matthews, based in the United Kingdom, continue to do an amazing service of bringing both the history and practice of the Celtic traditions to the public. Both have written numerous books on the subject. Most notably, John authored *The Celtic Shaman,* and Caitlín authored *Singing the Soul Back Home*. Through both practical

exercises and a detailed study of Celtic myth and texts, the two authors bring the practices of the Celts to life.

Much like John and Caitlín Matthews, author and teacher R. J. Stewart brings the Celtic faery and Underworld traditions to the modern pagan world. With a detailed foundation in both the Western Mysteries and Celtic lore, his works, such as *Earth Light* and *Power Within the Land*, teach practitioners to make real, living contact with the spirits of the Underworld.

Tom Cowan has added to the traditional lore of both witchcraft and shamanism. He coauthored *Power of the Witch* and *Love Magic* with Laurie Cabot and wrote *Fire in the Head*, a book of Celtic shamanism.

Author Kenneth Johnson has done remarkable work comparing various traditions of shamanism with paganism and witchcraft. His book *Witchcraft and the Shamanic Journey* (formerly *North Star Road*) was one of the first works presented to mainstream pagan practitioners that overtly demonstrates the similarities between witchcraft and shamanism through a survey of cultures as diverse as the Norse and the Mayan. He is also responsible for bringing greater awareness to Slavic magick and shamanism through his book *Slavic Sorcery.*

Two of the most influential pagan writers and teachers, active from the beginning of the revival of witchcraft to the modern day, are Janet and Stewart Farrar. Starting their witchcraft journey with Alex Sanders, Stewart was initiated into the coven by Maxine Sanders, Alex's wife and high priestess. There he met Janet Owen, his future wife. Together Stewart and Janet wrote numerous books on the tradition of witchcraft that have become staples in the modern craft.

Since Stewart's death in 2000, Janet has continued her teaching and writing with author and healer Gavin Bone. In her interview in Sally Griffyn's book *Wiccan Wisdomkeepers,* Janet explains that she no longer follows a specific tradition, but calls herself "Progressive Wiccan." She later wrote *Progressive Witchcraft* with Gavin Bone in 2004. The focus of her work has taken her in a more modern direction, away from the formal roots of the Alexandrian tradition, focusing on personal connection, ancestral deities, and the spirits of the local land. In a 1998 radio interview with Morgana of the Netherlands, Janet stated: "Our true Pagan ancestral roots are of Shamanic origin. All of the books we have written are a guideline to discovering those roots. Our active practice is

now far more Shamanistic. We truly believe that ancestral knowledge is passed down by word of mouth and experience, rather than high-bound laws."

There seems to be an evolution of the modern craft toward a return to, or at least an incorporation of, its shamanic roots. The seeds of revival of our neoshamanic practice were planted by Doreen Valiente and Robert Cochrane. Even those who were in the forefront of the movement to popularize the more formal traditions, such as Janet Farrar, have signaled a return to the shamanic truths of the witch.

[contents]

2

Opening the Veil

Witches are truly walkers between the worlds. Filling the role of the tribal shaman, we must have one foot in the material world, living up to our daily responsibilities. The other foot steps into the spiritual realm. We must also live up to our responsibilities with our otherworldly allies, by fulfilling our spiritual agreements with them. Our partnership with the spiritual world is one source of our magick. We stand poised between the worlds and learn to function in them all. Our inner vision lets us see the veil, the mist that separates the worlds. The veil is easy to pass through once you know where to look. Our magick helps us make the leap from one world to the next and back again, so we may bring wisdom, healing, and transformation as we travel.

The Eightfold Path

Though we don't think of most forms of traditional Wicca, such as Gardnerian Wicca, as very shamanic, we can find the seeds of shamanic witchcraft in their lore. Gerald Gardner's tradition teaches eight ways of power. Although they are used as methods to raise power in magick, they have many applications. I came upon these techniques, in this specific eightfold format, later in my practice. By the time I explored the teachings of Gardner, I had enough experience in other forms of magick and healing to see how obviously shamanic the eightfold path really is. Gardner was influenced by his time spent in the East, and we know that shamanic techniques are prevalent in the magickal systems of Asia. I originally taught these techniques in my practice as methods of inducing an altered state of consciousness (see *ITOW,* chapters 5 and 6). Through the altered states of consciousness, one can more easily pierce the veil between worlds.

The techniques can be divided into inhibitory and exhibitory categories. Inhibitory techniques are the focus of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*. They gently lower the activity of your body, relax you, and lull your brain waves into

a slower, deeper state of consciousness. Most meditation techniques fall into the inhibitory category.

Exhibitory, or excitatory, techniques are methods that heighten awareness. The trance state is caused through stimulating the senses. The excitement and energy raised brings a new perspective and awareness. The exhibitory methods do not seem particularly meditative or restful. In fact, they are quite often the opposite. But they do induce a profound altered state of consciousness, and that is what is necessary to pass through the veils separating matter and spirit.

Meditation

In the context of the eightfold path, meditation refers to focusing the awareness of your mind on one thing. The first meditation technique many witches learn is to stare into the flame of a candle, focusing all your awareness on the flame (*ITOW,* chapter 6, exercise 8). As you focus on the outer flame, you create a more focused inner flame of personal power. Other techniques of meditation include counting the seconds of your in and out breath, affirmations, staring into a mandala, or creating a visualization in your mind's eye. Meditation is an inhibitory technique.

Breath Control

Breath control is the regulation of the breath to alter consciousness and raise energy. Your breath will naturally change as you change activities. If you relax, your breathing will slow down. If you exercise, your breathing will become more rapid. If you consciously choose to slow down or speed up your breath, you will produce a change in your physical body and consciousness. Breath control can be both inhibitory and exhibitory, depending on the type of breath.

Isolation

Rituals that require one to be alone, such as keeping vigil in a cave or on a mountaintop, use the path of isolation. When you are cut off from normal society and communication, even for a short while, your awareness and energy change. Many shamanic rituals use isolation as a method of inducing trance. Isolation is usually inhibitory, though it may create feelings and thoughts within you that seem very agitated and excited.

Intoxication

The use of various substances, usually in the form of herbs, incense, oils, or wine, can help open the path to power. In Eurasian shamanism, hallucinogenic mushrooms and potentially toxic herbs are common. The difference between recreational use and spiritual use of intoxicants is the training and respect the practitioner has for these tools. Training imparts the knowledge of how much to use to open the gates. Those without the training and experience only create various sensations of drunkenness, not true awareness, when under the influence. Intoxication is usually inhibitory, though it depends on the substance you are using.

Sound

The use of music can aid in ritual and meditation. Inhibitory music helps us relax and soothes our mind. Exhibitory music stimulates and sharpens our focus. Drumming, with its pounding rapid rhythms, is usually used to excite the senses. The repetitive motion aids in entering a trance state. Rattles do the same. Siberian shamans will sometimes have jingling bells on their ritual outfits. Even the overtones of a singing bowl can stimulate you into a new consciousness. Chanting and singing yourself creates sound and regulates the breath.

Movement

Along with music there is movement. Simple inhibitory movements are held postures, such as remaining in a still, seated position, while exhibitory movements are more fluid. Hand postures are called mudras in the Eastern tradition. Yoga is another form of movement to induce inner change. Pulsing tribal dances, typically done in a circle, alter your state of consciousness. The rotation and rapid movement excite your awareness into a new view, where your body keeps moving, yet time seems to stop. Others drop into a deep trance state after exhaustion.

Sex

The path of sex is the Great Rite, held sacred in Wiccan circles worldwide. Though most traditions enact this cosmic sexual union ritualistically, through the blade and chalice, the physical use of sexual energy is quite powerful. Traditions of sex magick, from both the East and the West, are used to raise consciousness and spiritual awareness. Sexual energy is used to fuel spells,

typically through sigil magick. Sexual rituals, with yourself, a partner, or many partners, can be extremely powerful if you can keep your awareness and not get lost in your pleasure. Sexual arousal is an exhibitory technique.

Pain

Though I don't know many modern witches who use pain as a focus for their rituals, aside from the occasional light ritual whipping of the scourge, tribal traditions sometimes use piercing, tattooing, and branding as a part of rites of passage and shamanic initiation. The modern urban primitive is reclaiming these rituals. Rites such as the Sun Dance of the tribes of the North American plains use pain and suffering, through ritualistic piercing, as a prayer and are sometimes misunderstood by others. Pain is definitely an exhibitory technique.

If we think of consciousness as a wheel, we can see the relationship between inhibitory and exhibitory methods of trance (Figure 1). Normal waking consciousness, our everyday awareness that helps us talk to people, pay our bills, and interact with the physical world, is a finely balanced point on the top of the wheel. Inhibitory methods gently lull us down to the deepest levels of consciousness. This process is usually slower and relaxed. We are coaxed down to this place of deep insight.

Exhibitory methods push you off the top of the wheel, down into the place of deep consciousness. They are surprising, exciting, and sometimes even agitating. The shock, surprise, and even fear stimulate us to a new level of awareness. There is a sense of rapid movement to our thoughts and perception. Other times our body or the environment around us seems to be moving rapidly, and through a strange paradox, it brings a stillness to our inner mind and opens the gates to see new worlds.

Both forms get you into an altered state of consciousness. Both take you to a new level of insight and wisdom. Both allow you to perceive energy, entities, and magickal forces, but they do it in different ways. Different types of rituals require different techniques.

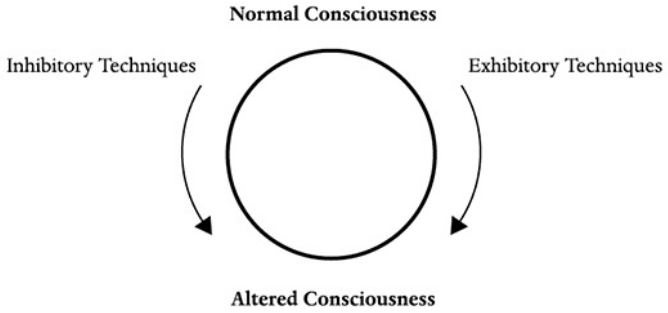


Figure 1: *Inhibitory and Exhibitory Techniques*

Shamanic Consciousness

The altered state of consciousness achieved by the shaman comes with many names and forms. I've heard normal waking consciousness described as ordinary reality, and magickal or visionary consciousness described as nonordinary reality. Michael Harner, author of *The Way of the Shaman*, refers to them as Ordinary State of Consciousness, or OSC, and Shamanic State of Consciousness, or SSC.

In this nonordinary, visionary state of consciousness, the practitioner is open to new information. Such states usually take place in a trance, with eyes closed. The shamanic practitioner sends forth his spirit into the land of the spirits and communes with them. The visionary state can also occur with eyes wide open, in dance or other ritual work, where the practitioner can sense spirits all around as the veil becomes thin.

In the shamanic state, the extraordinary is real. Though there is no physical evidence of mythical creatures such as dragons or giants in the physical world of ordinary consciousness, in nonordinary reality such creatures are quite real. The foundation of our mythology, what we think of as simple stories or psychological metaphors, are more likely the remnants of shamanic experiences told by those who could enter this nonordinary reality. They watched gods and spirits interact and then brought back the stories, songs, and symbols of these experiences. Many of our mythic heroes who traveled to the heavens and underworlds didn't necessarily do so in the ordinary world, but had these adventures through a shamanic level of consciousness. They are very real experiences, but occur on a different level of reality. In SSC, spirits can be perceived, and the gateways between this world and the spiritual worlds can be crossed.

A lot of modern shamans who share their stories are criticized for fabrication or exaggeration. In their ordinary reality, linear-thought critics do not realize the events the shamans are describing occurred while in a different state of consciousness. People who have never experienced other worlds do not understand the paradox of shamanic reality. Though such events may not be literally true, they are truer than many physical, provable events.

Ideally, all the senses are awakened in shamanic consciousness, yet some practitioners are more likely to absorb these impressions through psychic sight, hearing, or simply a sense of knowing. Impressions can be vivid at times. In other journeys they are vague feelings. Personally I've had both vividness and vagueness, and when I simply follow whatever impressions I get, vague or clear, I find the path and the meaning become more obvious. When I struggle to have a vivid experience and ignore my subtle impressions and feelings, my journey is stalled.

As you begin the path of journeying, or any type of visualized meditation, common questions may come up: Is this real? Am I making this up? Is it all in my head? Am I experiencing what I want and not what I need? These are all valid questions. Students will wonder how these journeys into nonordinary reality are different from daydreams and fantasies. They have similar qualities. The levels of consciousness one must enter to daydream or journey are similar. Questioning if a journey was real has been a constant theme in my own life. I have a vivid imagination at times. A lot of people involved in magick are quite creative and have vivid imaginations, too. How is journeying different from using your imagination?

I think imagination is a tool. It helps us build a bridge to the other worlds. It helps us meet them halfway. We visualize certain traditional imagery, found in our myths and oral lore, to get us to that state of consciousness. The images have survived in our mythology because they are such powerful tools. They work. Images of trees, mountains, caves, and seashores are all tools to launch your journey. You do not have to divorce yourself from your imagination. It's your greatest tool, along with your will. It is an asset for your magickal work.

Unlike daydreams, however, shamanic journey contains a threshold you cross where the journey takes on a life of its own. Imagination gives way to experience, and you start to simply experience things that go beyond your personal will and imagination. Spiritual beings met in the journey have their own

life, will, and powers. They are not easily dismissed by your imagination, and at times their symbolic imagery can be verified by outside sources. I have had psychics accurately describe spiritual allies I've met in the shamanic worlds, and have had them describe to me my totem animal.

The path of the solitary witch, without this feedback, can be difficult. Many choose to look at shamanism in terms of psychology, where each spirit is considered an aspect of ourselves. There's nothing wrong with that, as psychologists and shamans have similar roles, but as your practice grows, you might realize that you are not only exploring your own mind, but the divine mind, and the spirits you meet within you have parallels in the outer world.

I learned one difficult but very helpful technique to tell the difference between imagination and otherworldly journey. It's difficult because those spiritual beings you test do not necessarily enjoy being tested, and will let you know it. If you are questioning the validity of your experience, and you encounter a being (for example, an animal, teacher, or deity), try to change the appearance they present to you. Use your willpower and imagination. Change their size, clothing, or coloring. Usually you can't, or can't hold the new image for long. The impression snaps back to its original form, and the spirit being might be angry or resentful toward you. They will act like a real person that you tried to control or manipulate, and will usually make their unhappiness known to you. Some spirits are understanding if you explain that you had your doubts and needed to get verification. Certain pagans and shamans would see such tests as blasphemous, but don't take things on faith or take my word on it. You need to explore for yourself. This test is not an easy method, but it can prove enlightening.

Detractors of modern shamanic practice will be the first to tell you the experience isn't real. They may even believe in shamanism and magick, but feel that no white suburban middle-class dabbler can have a true mystical experience. Those are reserved for Native American medicine men or holy people living an ascetic life on a mountaintop. Some think magick is only valid if it's ancient and secret. They think that true magick can't be found in a book or workshop, but they are wrong. Though it's true that far too many people take one class in shamanism, set up a sign, and start advertising themselves as authentic shamans, the techniques and experience of shamanism are for

anyone who wants to put in the time and effort to experience them. We are all spiritual beings and are free to have valid, spiritual experiences. Most "authentic" shamans I know never invalidate another's experience. They simply listen and accept your experience as your own even if it might not match theirs. Most of us with the desire to study don't have the opportunity or means to travel to distant and exotic lands for months or years. We have far more seekers than we have traditional teachers. Part of our challenge in this age is to bring magick into our modern, daily lives.

The only test of validity is, does it work? If you can enter a trance and converse with spirits and then bring back knowledge or healing and have someone benefit from it, then you are practicing a form of shamanism. As a witch, you may already be practicing forms of shamanism and not even know it. It's part of our heritage and available to all who seek it.

At the end of the day, I'm a practical witch. I don't care if you think of shamanic journey in terms of popular psychology or ancient mysticism. I don't care if you think you are talking to your inner voice or the divine creative spirits. Is it helping you? Is it healing you? If so, then it's real.

The Ways of Shamanic Journey

Shamans learn control and discipline to enter and leave the shamanic state of consciousness. Though intuitive impressions may come and go throughout the day, a shaman will know how to consciously control the shift between worlds, and will be able to function in normal society in a completely healthy way. In modern New Age and pagan practices, many people are perceived as "flaky" because they lack this discipline and feel themselves whisked off to another level of consciousness, spacing out in mid-sentence. Shamans are many things, but flaky is not one of them. They may be eccentric and unusual, but they are expected to manage their earthly affairs as well as their spiritual ones.

Many shamanic techniques are exhibitory. The ecstasy of the shaman is not always serene and quiet. Frequently it is frenetic and energizing. Ecstasy literally refers to becoming "loose" from the body. Dance and music are two primary forms of opening the veil and traveling to the spirit worlds. Though shamans are versed in more sedate versions of meditation, they usually prefer the more dynamic methods. Once you are well versed in a technique, it's hard

to see the difference between inhibitory and exhibitory, since they get you to the same place.

Music is one of the easiest methods of entering a shamanic state. I prefer drumming myself, though some people are partial to the sound of a rattle or the ring of a singing bowl. Some shamans use the rattle to begin and end rituals, while others shake it for the entire journey. Some use bells and ornaments that jingle as the shaman dances and sways.

The rhythms of music actually shift our brain waves. It is like a room full of mechanical clocks. At first, each will tick at its own pace, out of phase with the others. But eventually a dominant rhythm will be created, as the ticking of the clocks are entrained into a synchronized harmony. When clocks are exposed to a dominant rhythm, they naturally adjust to a uniform rhythm. The same principle holds true for people and personal energy. It is the Hermetic Principle of Rhythm in action (*ITOW,* chapter 8). When we are exposed to a dominant rhythm, such as that of a drum or rattle, our brain waves easily shift. Scientists have measured EEG readings during shamanic ceremonies to show how the rhythms bring brain waves into an altered state of consciousness.

Overall, in teaching shamanic journey, I have found the steady beat of a drum to be the most reliable technique to induce an altered state for the greatest number of people. Drumming seems to push or propel the consciousness to new awareness. Shamans sometimes refer to the drum as their “steed” or “canoe,” symbolizing its power to help them travel. While journeying, they might hear the beat of the drum as the hooves of a horse carrying them to their spirits, or envision themselves inside a canoe, riding down the cosmic river, ocean, or lake.

The beat of the drum usually relates to the heartbeat. Traditional drumming comes in many patterns and rhythms, but there are some universal constants to the technique. The range of beats per minute usually starts somewhere near that of the relaxed human heartbeat, and can go as fast as double the heartbeat. Shamanic journeys are between 120 to 200 beats per minute. Healing rituals follow the gentle “lub-lub” rhythm of the heart, while journeys are usually fast paced. I think of the fast-paced beats as similar to modern dance-club music. Modern clubs now play music that mimics the pace and pattern of tribal beats. The music helps bring dancers to an altered consciousness, whether they realize it or not.

New students to shamanic journey think the drumming will be slow and relaxed, more inhibitory, and at first are often quite shocked at the fast pace and loud noise of some shamanic drumbeats. The beat excites some people, while others are agitated, angered, or frightened by it, even when logically there is no reason to get upset. The beat stirs their energies, and when you go to a deeper level of awareness, you are forced to look at and work with energies you have repressed.

In traditional societies, the shaman's apprentice or spouse would play the drum or rattle. Not all of us are lucky enough to have such a helper. Some practitioners can play an instrument or sing for themselves to induce trance, but most shamans prefer to focus on their inner vision while someone else keeps the beat. Modern techno-shamans and witches have no problem using recordings of drums, rattles, or other tribal-sounding music to help induce a trance. Most music used for shamanic work does not have the traditional Western structures or harmony and form to it, but your journeying music doesn't have to be tribal. I know many practitioners who use classical music, cultural songs and chants (such as Celtic music), ambient New Age music, or even technological dance music generated by drum machines.

I prefer music with a steady beat that will propel me forward. I like instruments with strong overtones to them. Real drums have strong overtones that are generated when played. Drums are best live, in person, but the feeling can be captured on a recording. Metal or crystal singing bowls contain the most otherworldly overtones and can propel you to a deeper journey. Explore music to find pieces that will help you journey. Listen to each one, and notice the feelings it conjures up in you. Ask yourself if it will help induce shamanic consciousness. If so, make a note to keep it on hand for future exercises.

Each piece should ideally be between fifteen and thirty minutes long. Since shamanic journeys occur outside of our ordinary perception of space and time, a lot of things can happen in a short period of ordinary time. Traditional shamanic patterns have a definitive break at the end, with a shorter, intense passage of beats that is named a "callback" because it signals to the practitioner that the journey is almost over. Finish your business, say your farewells, and come back to ordinary reality. The callback is usually a few slow beats followed by a few minutes of frenetic drumming that is different from the

journeying beat.

The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft CD Companion contains many beats and rhythms with the appropriate times and callbacks for your journeying needs. I also suggest a series of seven recordings put out by Michael Harner's Foundation for Shamanic Studies, which includes a variety of instruments to induce shamanic consciousness (shamanism.org).

The Magick of Meditation

The primary focus of this book is on the traditional shamanic methods of raising consciousness. Some of these exercises will be easier for you if you are already versed in the more traditional, inhibitory forms of meditation and visualization commonly practiced in the traditions of witchcraft. If such meditations are new to you, then I suggest reviewing my first two books in the Temple of Witchcraft series. You can use the following two exercises to review or become familiar with the skills you will need to complete this work.

Exercise 1

Entering a Meditative State

1. Get into a comfortable position. If you are going into an inner meditative experience, make sure you are sitting comfortably, either feet flat on the floor or cross-legged on the floor. If you are getting into a lighter ritual consciousness, simply stand with feet apart to give you balance and support.

2. Take a few deep breaths, and relax your body. Bring your awareness to the top of your body, starting at the head, and give yourself permission to relax. As you breathe, release the tension. Move from your head and neck into the shoulders and arms. Relax and feel all the tension melt away. Relax your chest and back. Feel waves of relaxation move down your spine. Relax your abdomen, lower back, and hips. Relax your legs, down to your ankles and feet. Feel the waves of relaxation sweep all that doesn't serve your highest good out through your fingers and toes, grounding and neutralizing this unwanted energy into the earth, transforming it like fallen leaves that decay and are eventually transformed into new soil.

3. Relax your mind. Release any unwanted thoughts and worries as you exhale. Relax your heart, and open it to the love of the Goddess and God. Relax your soul, and follow your inner light for guidance and protection.

4. Visualize a giant screen before you, like a blackboard or movie screen. This is the screen of your mind, or what is called your mind's eye. Whenever you visualize or recall a person's face or anything else, you project it onto this screen. Anything you desire will appear on the screen.

5. On the screen of your mind, visualize a series of numbers, counting down from twelve to one. With each number you get into a deeper meditative state. The numbers can be any color you desire, drawn as if writing them on the screen or appearing whole and fully formed on the screen, without having to draw them.

Now visualize 12, see the number 12 on your screen, 12,
11, see the number 11 on your screen, 11,
10, see the number 10 on your screen, 10,
9, see the number 9 on your screen, 9,
8, see the number 8 on your screen, 8,
7, see the number 7 on your screen, 7,
6, see the number 6 on your screen, 6,
5, see the number 5 on your screen, 5,
4, see the number 4 on your screen, 4,
3, see the number 3 on your screen, 3,
2, see the number 2 on your screen, 2,
1, see the number 1 on your screen, 1.

6. You are at your ritual state of consciousness. Everything done at this level is for your highest good, harming none. (If doing ritual, you do not need to count further, so skip step 7. If you desire to meditate, do step 7.)

7. You will now count down to a deeper, more focused meditative state. Count backwards from thirteen to one, but do not visualize the numbers this time. Let the numbers gently take you down: 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. You are now at your deepest meditative state, your magickal mindset, in complete control of your magickal abilities. Say to yourself:

I ask the Goddess and God to protect and guide me in this meditation.

8. From here, you can continue on to other exercises and experiences, or meditate at this level for a bit and then bring yourself up, counting from one to thirteen and then from one to twelve. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes, and slowly move to bring your awareness back to the physical world.

9. Take both hands, and raise them up over your head, palms facing your crown. Slowly bring them down over your forehead, face, throat, chest, abdomen, and groin, and then "push out" with your palms facing away from you. This gives you clearance and balance, releasing any harmful or unwanted energies you might have picked up during your magickal experiences. Tell yourself:

I give myself clearance and balance. I am in balance with myself. I am in balance with the universe. I release all that does not serve my highest good.

10. Ground yourself as needed. You can ground yourself back into the physical world by pressing your hands down onto the floor and releasing any excess energy into the earth. You can also visualize your feet and toes as roots digging deep into the earth. When all else fails, activating your digestive system by drinking a full glass of water or eating something can bring your energy back to your body.

Exercise 2

The Inner Temple

1. Start Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State to get into your magickal mindset.

2. In your mind's eye, visualize the great World Tree, a gigantic tree reaching up to the heavens and deep below the earth, larger than any tree you have ever seen. It is a sacred tree, and you might recognize it as oak, ash, pine, willow, or any other tree that has meaning for you. If you don't visualize anything, sense the tree with your other psychic senses. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth where its roots dig in. Feel the texture of the bark. Simply know the tree is there, and it will be. The tree is ever present and everywhere.

3. Imagine that the screen of your mind's eye is like a window or doorway, a portal through which you can easily pass. Step through the screen and stand before the World Tree. Look up and feel its power. Touch the tree, and with your will, place the intention of visiting your inner temple into the tree. The tunnels within the tree will guide you to your inner temple.

4. Look around the base of the giant tree, in the roots, and search for a passageway. It may be a hole or tunnel, or even a pool of water that gives you entry into the tree. As you enter, you find yourself in a tunnel, winding and spiraling to your inner temple.

5. At the end of the tunnel you see a light, and you move toward that light and step out into your inner temple. Look around. Take stock of all you see. Notice all the fine details of your sacred space. Let the images come to you. The inner temple can be a place you have visited in the physical world, or an amalgam of sacred sites and shrines from your deepest inner knowing.

6. Explore your inner temple. You will find a variety of sacred objects for your use. Usually there is a reflective surface, such as a mirror or pool of water, for gazing. Gardens, plants, altars, crystals, and a variety of tools will be found. Gateways leading to other energies and levels of consciousness can also be found. Your inner temple is like your launching pad for deeper journeys. You can find the Gateway of Guidance and call to your spirit guides and teachers. You can step through the Gateway of Healing and receive the energy you need. Anything is possible in the inner temple.

7. If there is anything about your temple that you do not like, you can change it now by doing some inner spiritual decorating. Your temple will reflect your own inner being. Usually it responds to your will, and reflects your state of inner awareness. If something will not change, it is usually a message that you need to change something in your physical life to make the inner change a reality.

8. Once done, return through the World Tree tunnel that brought you to this place, and stand before the World Tree. Step back through the screen of your mind's eye, and let the World Tree gently fade from view.

9. Return yourself to normal consciousness by counting up. Give yourself clearance and balance by bringing your hands to the top of your head and sweeping downward over the chakra column, releasing unwanted energy by smoothing it away (*ITOW*, chapters 6 and 11). Do any necessary grounding.

Practice exercises 1 and 2 to build your skill with empowered visualization. They are building blocks to deeper work, giving you the tools to enter deeper states of consciousness and a home base from which to journey and receive healing or protection.

Shamanism and Psychic Ability

Deepening psychic ability is a large part of shamanic and witchcraft training, another parallel of both arts showing that their roots are entwined. Shamans are known to give prophecy, speak with spirits to receive guidance, and "see" things in the physical and nonphysical worlds that give them greater insight into the tribe's problems.

In shamanic traditions, the practitioner is encouraged to look at things in a nonordinary way to see nonordinary reality. By paying attention to what no one else looks at, and by doing what no one else does, a shaman can follow intuition and know what no one else knows. Many mystical traditions that have parallels to shamanism encourage a nonordinary view of life (including ritual magick, alchemy, and yoga), but few spell it out as clearly as shamanic training.

The awareness that most people use is called First Attention. Most people in a community pay attention to the obvious. Very few look beyond the ordinary or expected. Observations are made on a surface level, and conclusions are drawn that are sometimes inaccurate.

Shamans cultivate Second Attention and are viewed as a bit peculiar with their new habits. They might stare off into space, immerse their attention in a pile of sand, or walk backwards. This might seem like "not doing" or being lazy to others at First Attention, but the practitioners actually receive great benefits from not doing and just being. They break the internal dialogue that supports the First Attention. Many think of these techniques as "stalking the ego," where the mystic recognizes she is a spiritual being, not her mind and not her ego.

She learns to tame the ego into a tool, a servant rather than a master. Only by getting out of the ordinary do we recognize the ego for what it really is and open our awareness to a new reality. We learn to identify with the higher self, the divine, rather than the middle self, or ego and body.

Many of these Second Attention exercises are about pulling out of the daily grind, the daily flow of society, and learning to do everything in a mindful, present manner. By learning to make every action purposeful, we clear our mind and gain a new awareness. We look at the world from a wholly different point of view. These techniques could be the roots of certain forms of meditation and martial arts.

By seeing both the obvious and the subtle, shamans merge First and Second Attention into what some call the Third Attention, allowing them to move between the worlds of the ordinary and the magickal. To develop your Second Attention and ultimately learn a harmonious Third Attention, try the following techniques.

Observing

By observing the things people don't take time to notice, you can see new things. Take time to stare at the world through unfocused vision. By relaxing the vision, we can see the space between things. Watch the clouds. Observe the shapes and images. Sit down with a rock and really soak up its details. I like to do this with big rocks on the beach. Watch the patterns of sand and soil. Watch water. Watch it flow when it moves and watch the reflections of light when it's still. You might see magickal patterns, symbols, and scripts in nature that will give you power later. In particular, watch shadows and the space between shadows. Patterns of darkness and light can reveal many things. When you interact with others, observe their body movements and presence as much as their words. You don't necessarily need to make judgments on those movements—just observe them.

Blindness

Just as an observation can bring insight, so can a lack of sight. By blocking out visual information and focusing on the other senses, you move through the world differently. Take some time to wear a blindfold, and carefully make your way around your home or other familiar environments. See how familiar it is now? Try it for a half hour, and persevere, even if you feel the urge to take the

blindfold off. Blindness can reveal fears. It can also teach us about patience.

Listening

Take time to listen to the sounds around you. If you are out in nature, simply listen. If you are in the city, listen to the traffic and street noise. Listen to whatever is around you, and pay attention to how different sounds feel in your body. Listen to the absence of sound, too. If you try the blindness exercise, listening will become even more important.

Eating

When you eat, be mindful. Many of us tend to rush through our meals and snacks. Avoid doing anything else when you are eating. Stop talking, watching television, or reading. Take time to appreciate all the flavors, smells, textures, and colors. Feel the energy of your food. What elements does it resonate with, and how do they affect you? Pay attention. Bless your food before eating it, and see if it changes your experience.

Grounding

Increase your contact with the earth itself. Walk in the woods, and practice some of the other Second Attention techniques as you do. Take time out to lie down on the ground. If you can, do it in a field, a forest, or even on the lawn. Feel the pulse of the earth beneath you. Sit on the ground. Touch it. Run your fingers through the soil. Build a relationship with the living earth.

Sound

We are often so reserved in the way we communicate. Sometimes we want to yell, but don't. Sometimes we want to cry, but don't. When you want to make a noise, make it. When you want to cry, cry. Take some time in private to make whatever noise you want. Yell when you don't have a reason. Cry when you don't have a reason. Simply let it flow.

Silence

To balance your work with sound, try working with silence. Those who go on retreats to monasteries and mountains use silence as part of the path of isolation. Through temporary isolation from others and society, great flashes of insight can occur. Just like the blindness exercise, set a time and make yourself a promise to be mute for a certain amount of time. You can probably

go longer with silence than with blindness. Pick a day to be silent, and notice how your thoughts change when you cannot vocalize with others.

Disrupting Routines

Break away from your normal habits and routines. Whatever you normally do, try to do something else. It sounds silly, but if you always put your socks on the right foot and then the left, switch it around. If you always start your day with a cup of coffee, don't. Move out of your normal safety zones, and see how it affects your sense of comfort and fear. Sometimes slight, inconsequential changes can bring up agitation. Learning to break out of these mind traps, the traps of our expectations, is essential to a deeper magickal practice. Fluidity in routines also allows magickal guidance to enter your life through synchronicity. If you are too regimented, new opportunities cannot come your way.

Walking

A classic example of a Second Attention exercise is spending some time trying to walk backwards. It's like learning to walk again. You will see things from a new perspective. Walking backwards is almost like walking back in time. Shamans move through other times as well as other worlds. If it's not realistic to do this in your life, be mindful of your regular walking. Be mindful of all your movements. Try walking barefoot through the grass. Really feel each step and sensation.

Taking on Different Roles

Shamans who walk between worlds work with many different identities. Part of the training involves breaking out of the ego by breaking out of the identity, the persona you are attached to. Shamans will take on new personas for short periods of time, or in certain social situations, to exist in a new role. You can break out of your role by dressing differently. If you are normally neat, prim, and proper, try going for a more disheveled look. If you almost never dress formally, put yourself in a formal social situation. Seek it out. I'm not a baseball-hat-wearing, sports-watching kind of guy, but I find it interesting to take on that dress and those mannerisms and visit a "regular guys" hangout bar or pool hall. In some tribes, shamans dress in the clothing of the opposite gender to transform their outer persona and identity.

As you practice these tools for a new awareness, notice how your intuition grows. Notice how you see the subtle and unknown. Though all of these exercises can be helpful, many are not practical in modern daily life. Though it can be fun and interesting to spend time walking backwards or working with a blindfold, we might not be able to go to work and get away with it. So in an effort to balance your daily responsibilities with your magickal ones, use discretion and follow your own guidance when using these techniques.

Practice of these techniques will heighten anyone's sense of intuition and psychic ability. For more formal exercises on psychic development, I suggest reviewing *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft,* particularly the material involving the aura, spirit communication, and healing. All of these techniques can be applied to the core shamanic context of this branch of the craft.

[contents]

3

Making Sacred Space

Both shamans and witches are ceremonial leaders. They are charged with creating rituals to empower themselves and their tribes. Most rituals require the creation of sacred space, a living temple in which to honor the divine and work magick. All cultures and all practitioners have their ways of creating sacred space. For those in modern mainstream religions, sacred space might be linked to a place, to a building, though many churches were built on ancient pagan holy sites.

Traditions based in nature simply recognize the space wherever they are. Certain locations are power spots, but all spaces are sacred. Ritual helps you recognize the sacredness. Energy is present wherever you are. You are always surrounded by energy. Ritual helps you feel the flow of the energy and create your sacred space.

When you are in sacred space, you clear the area of any harmful, unwanted energies that could disrupt your ritual. You create a protected space that prevents harmful energies from entering your ritual. You enter a conscious relationship with the spirits, the aspects of the divine that you have called. Your communication with these entities is clearer and more direct. You raise the vibration of the space so your intention, your will, manifests. In sacred space, you align your essential selves—your conscious mind, psychic mind, and divine mind—to create change (*ITOW*, chapter 5). In short, sacred space aligns you with your magick.

The Magick Circle

In my practice, I always look to see what is the same among different traditions, lands, and customs, for I feel that what we share is far stronger than what divides us. In my studies, I was stunned to find so many common points across many traditions in the methods of creating sacred space through honoring the directions. Most nature-based traditions have some history of

honoring the directions and attributing certain powers, elements, or beings to each.

I learned these principles as the magick circle ritual in witchcraft. It has parallels in ceremonial magick. As I broadened my studies, I found it in diverse shamanic traditions across the globe. It makes sense. Those out in nature would naturally see the expansive horizons in each direction, and notice the different flows of energy when facing the directions. Many cultures look to the equal-armed cross, sometimes drawn within a circle, as a symbol of spirituality and balance (Figure 2). In astrology, the circled cross is the glyph for the planet earth.

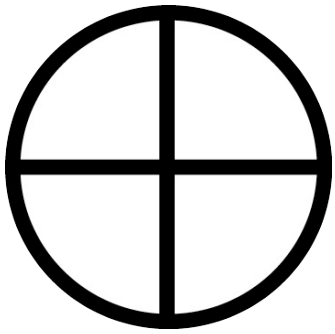


Figure 2: *Equal-Armed Cross in the Circle*

The variety of traditions, both in modern paganism and in more global traditions, have different correspondences with the directions. None are absolutely right or wrong. Each has its merits, and ultimately, if they work for you, they are right for you.

My favorite association with the directions is the one I first learned. It is based on having primal elements opposing each other. Fire and water are on opposite ends of an axis, east and west, respectively, and earth and air are on the north/south axis. Some find this energy too intense. Other predominant traditions put air in the east and fire in the south. I've even recently become acquainted with a tradition of Welsh witchcraft that puts air in the north and earth in the east.

Witches base the arrangement of their altars upon their magickal correspondences. Items relating to each of the four elements are placed in their appropriate positions on the table, making the altar a microcosm or map of the magick circle itself. The altar is like a teaching tool. By looking at it, you can remember most of the steps involved in creating this form of sacred space.

Most witchcraft traditions have their altar face the north or east because they are powerful centers of energy and auspicious places to begin rituals. The altar also contains items to represent the Goddess and God, as well as special power items and functional tools such as crystals, feathers, matches, or oils.

In the following section are the instructions for casting a witch's magick circle. If you are not familiar with it from previous experiences, I suggest you learn how to cast such a circle as part of your prior training before delving deeply into shamanic witchcraft. Any of the journeys, rituals, and exercises in this book can be focused or magnified through the use of sacred space and the magick circle ritual. Extensive training in the magick circle is found in *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft.*

The Magick Circle Ritual

Cleansing Self and Space

You can use techniques of ritual bathing to cleanse yourself, and burn purifying incense or visualize cleansing white or violet light to cleanse the area.

Casting the Circle

Take your wand, starting in the north, and visualize tracing a ring of light from the tip of your wand into the air. Create three clockwise, or *deosil,* rings, each on top of the other. Make sure the rings are big enough to comfortably accommodate the ritual you are doing. Say:

I cast this circle to protect us from all forces that come to do us harm.

I charge this circle to allow only the most perfect energies for this work, and block out all other energies.

I charge this circle to create a space beyond space, a time beyond time, a temple of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, where the highest will is sovereign. So mote it be.

Calling the Quarters

Face each direction as you petition the four elements and their guardians to anchor your circle and lend their creative energies. In this circle, the quarter calls are crafted with animal spirits, though other circles may use angels, deities, or pure elementals (*OTOW,* chapter 6). Say:

To the north, I call upon the element of earth, and the great Stag. Hail and welcome.

To the east, I call upon the element of fire, and the proud Lion. Hail and welcome.

To the south, I call upon the element of air, and the wise Crow. Hail and welcome.

To the west, I call upon the element of water, and the loving Dolphin. Hail and welcome.

Evocation

Call upon the divine powers to manifest in your circle:

I call upon the Two Who Move As One in the love of the Great Spirit, Goddess, and God to aid me in this magick. I call upon my highest spirit guides and guardians to be present. Hail and welcome.

Naming the Work

State the intention of the circle. If you have a spell to do, state the intention. If you cast the circle for journeying, state that intention.

Anointing

Anoint your wrists and/or third eye with protection potion (*OTOW*, chapter 13), oil, or salt and water. I usually draw a banishing pentagram as I anoint (Figure 3). Say:

I use this potion to protect me from all harm, on any level. Blessed be.

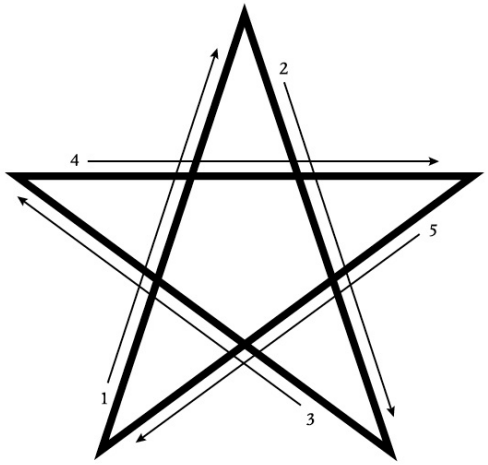


Figure 3: *Banishing Pentagram*

Great Rite

The Great Rite is the union of the Goddess and God ritually in the circle. It is usually done through the symbolic enactment of the blade into the chalice. Hold the blade to the sky, and if doing a moon ritual, connect to the energy of the moon. Draw it down into your circle. Then plunge the blade into the chalice three times, and say:

> *As the sword is to the grail, the blade is to the chalice, and truth is to love. I draw together the power of the Goddess and God, and drink it in.*

Drink from the chalice. Share it with others taking part in your circle if you are in a group.

Raising Energy

Raising energy is only really necessary for spell work. It can be done through song, chant, dance, sex, or most typically through intense concentration and visualization. If you are going to meditate or journey, you do not need to specifically raise energy.

The Work

The work is the purpose of the circle, and includes spellcraft, healing, divination, meditation, or shamanic journey.

Raising the Cone of Power

When doing magick, if you plan on manifesting an intention, you must release that energy into the universe to do its work. This burst of energy from a ritual circle is known as the cone of power. You raise the cone of power by extending your arms up, feet apart, into what is called the Goddess position, and then feeling the energy release from the top of the circle. Then you reflect on the intention in the God position, arms crossed over the heart and feet together (*OTOW,* chapter 11).

Grounding

The remaining energy is released and returned to the earth with an intention of healing the earth. Witches place their hands on the ground, sometimes getting on their hands and knees, and “push” the energy into the earth. If you are indoors, imagine it going through the building and into the earth. If you cannot reach down, you can ground the energy through the altar, through a ritual staff

or sword touching the ground, or simply through will and visualization.

Final Blessing

During the final blessing, you have the opportunity to do any minor works of magick with any remaining energy while still in a sacred space, such as general blessings and healing intentions.

Devocation

Devocation is the release of all spirits gathered. Say:

> *I thank and release the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, and any and all spirits who came in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust. Stay if you will. Go if you must. Hail and farewell.*

Release the Quarters

Release the quarters, starting where you began and moving counterclockwise:

> *To the north, I thank and release the element of earth, and the great Stag. Hail and farewell.*
>
> *To the west, I thank and release the element of water, and the loving Dolphin. Hail and farewell.*
>
> *To the south, I thank and release the element of air, and the wise Crow. Hail and farewell.*
>
> *To the east, I thank and release the element of fire, and the proud Lion. Hail and farewell.*

Release the Circle

Release the circle, starting in the north and tracing it counterclockwise, or *widdershins,* only once. I imagine it expanding outward infinitely. Say:

> *I cast this circle out into the cosmos as a sign of my magick. The circle is undone, but never broken. So mote it be.*

Shamanic Sacred Space

Shamanic traditions have equally beautiful rituals for creating sacred space, also based on the directions and elements. Many of these rituals are less formal than the witch's magick circle, while others may seem extremely formal and precise. With less of a focus on spellcraft, these rituals serve a different

purpose than the witch's circle. I compare the circle to the witch's cauldron, a container for the energy to feed your spells. Though many shamanic traditions raise energy, their rituals do not always create the same type of container for it in the same way witches do. They do, however, create the boundary of sacred space. Many witches have noticed the similarity in feeling when entering a magick circle and entering a Native American ritual space. There is an inherent stillness found in both.

One technique of these shamanic rituals that immediately caught my attention was the use of more than four directions to create a sacred space. With this new form of ritual, I felt a sense of completeness that wasn't always present in traditional witchcraft rituals. Shamanic practitioners can add the directions of above, below, and center to the better-known four directions. Certain traditions even add left and right sides, inside the four directions.

Together, these points make nine directions when included with the four cardinal points. Nine is a very powerful number. Nine and its multiples are associated with the power of infinity. Nine is the Triple Goddess tripled. Many traditions forgo left and right sides and prefer seven sacred directions. Seven shows up again and again in magick across the world, including the seven chakras, the seven ancient magickal planets, and the seven days of the week.

Though most witches call the power of these directions intuitively, by acknowledging them when calling upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, few witches think of these three forces in terms of the directions below, above, and center. Although sacred space is all around us, these sacred directions ask us to consciously orient ourselves in the sacred space three-dimensionally, not just in a flat plane. Though witches cast a circle, most of us think of it in terms of a sphere of power. We will learn soon that the shaman's worldview includes not only the realms of the four elements, but also the upper worlds and the lower worlds.

Each of the directions corresponds with a part of your life. Each symbolizes an experience that is part of the human condition. As long as you are in a physical body, you are in a world with these directions, and have to work with what they represent. Even if you have no conscious knowledge of these directions or any of the mystical terminology, you still work with these life powers.

North

The element of earth most often corresponds to the north. This element is about physical existence. Though it is linked with money and finances, it also relates to health, the body, food, and the stability and security of your home.

East

I associate fire with the east. Fire is the element of passion and intensity. It is the energy of your soul, the divine spark that drives you. Where do you put your passion? That is where your fire is. Some use fire energy for career, for romance, for art, or for spiritual evolution. Fire is all about doing things to explore your identity.

South

Air is the element of the south, representing the mind, the intellect, and the ability to communicate. Air is how you speak and how you listen, as well as how you communicate with others and with yourself.

West

The element of water is almost universally associated with the west, even in some traditions with an eastern coastline. The west deals with endings, as the sun sets in the west. Water is the element of emotion, relationship, family, and healing. When you feel things intensely, you are using your water energy.

Above

Above is the direction associated with enlightenment and understanding. The realms above are about spiritual awareness, detachment, and seeing the big picture, as if you were looking down from a bird's-eye view. Above is associated with the level of super consciousness, or the higher self.

Below

Below is the realm of practical spirituality. It is about taking care of your needs and desires. Below also represents what is unseen. What lies beneath the surface? Your shadow is cast on the ground below you, and most people never even take the time to look at it. Below is the unconscious.

Center

The center, or the direction within, is the energy of spirit, the fifth element. The center is the truth, or at least your best interpretation of it. The center is your

true self, your core, and the deepest aspects of your spiritual self.

Left

The left side is about your ability to receive. It can be lessons of taking care of yourself and learning to nurture your inner being. Left is traditionally associated with the feminine realm, as well as emotional health and family. The left stresses aspects of your private life.

Right

The right side concerns your ability to project, or send out, energy. The right is your dynamic energy, and the ability to take action or create. The right is the realm of the masculine, along with your public or work life.

If you learned different associations for the elements and directions, and are more comfortable with them, please feel free to do what is right for you. If you are left-handed, you might switch the associations with left and right. As long as you have all the aspects and put them in a direction for your own personal mandala, you will be ready for the experiences ahead.

As each direction corresponds with an aspect of life, shamans associate a variety of personal or tribal spirits with each of these sacred traditions. The spirits of the direction act as teachers for that aspect of life. Traditionally animal spirits are placed in each of the directions, and many call this practice the medicine wheel. As you discover each directional ally, you will discover more about yourself. I associate many spirits with each direction, including animal, plant and crystal spirits, as well as deities.

For now, copy the directional spirit wheel (Figure 4) in your Book of Shadows, your own magickal record and journal. As you discover your spiritual team, write down the allies that you associate with each direction.

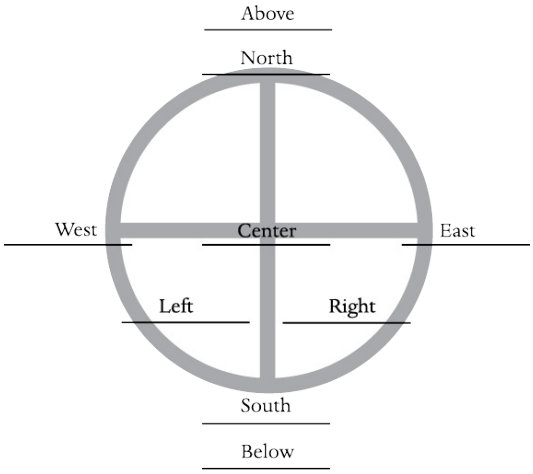


Figure 4: *Directional Spirit Wheel*

Shamanic sacred space is created by calling upon the spirits, usually animals, associated with each of the directions. Through this ritual, you are calling your allies to attention. Since you might not be sure which spirits reside in each direction for you, we shall start out with a simple smudging ritual honoring the directions, without getting into specific spirits.

Smudging Herbs

Smudging refers to the use of sacred smoke. Shamanic traditions bundle sacred herbs together, consecrate them, and burn them. The smoke releases energy and scent that raises the vibration of an area, banishing harmful lower vibrations. Although some people think “to smudge” means to smear the ashes, in this context smudging refers to passing an object or person through the smoke, or passing the smoke through an area.

Flameproof vessels are used to contain the burning bundles. Some shamanic practitioners use a shell, such as an abalone shell, to contain the burning herbs, though just as many feel that is inappropriate because the shell is a spirit from the water, not of fire and smoke. They feel a clay vessel should be used since both clay and the plants come from the ground. I’ve used both and like both. I have a shell that is my favorite. I know witches who also smudge from their cauldron, or have a special “incense” cauldron. Feathers are used to spread the smoke and keep the embers lit. A special feather or a handcrafted feather fan can be used to waft the smoke during smudging rituals. Again, the type of feather depends on the tradition. Use the one that is right for you. Crow

feathers are my favorite, as I have been blessed by the crows many times by finding their feathers on walks in the fields and woods.

Sage is traditionally used in these rituals. Most New Age and metaphysical stores carry sage bundles or loose leaves. Though there are several varieties, the most popular are brush sage *(Artemisia tridentata)* and California white sage *(Salvia apiana).* Cedar *(Juniperus virginia)* and sweetgrass *(Hierochloe odorata)* are also burned in combination with sage. Though these sages are common in the West and Southwest, for practitioners who don't have these plants growing abundantly near them and choose not to purchase them from stores, there are quite a few alternatives.

My honored herbal teacher, Wendy Snow Fogg, teaches her students to make sacred smudge sticks using locally grown herbs. Many excellent plants grow wild in the New England area and across much of the country. They can also be cultivated in a garden.

Here is a list of herbs that I have used in smudge bundle sticks.

Mugwort *(Artemisia vulgaris)*

Lavender *(Lavandula vera)*

Sweet fern (*Comptonia peregrina*)

Cedar *(Juniperus virginia)*

Juniper *(Juniperus communis)*

White pine *(Pinus strobus)*

Garden sage *(Salvia officinalis)*

Hyssop *(Hyssopus officinalis)*

My favorite is mugwort, which grows wild all over my area. Mugwort is cleansing, but also psychically stimulating. Its smoke opens the gates to help one journey and speak with spirits. Mugwort is an herb related to the moon and witchcraft, since it is also a plant sacred to Artemis. You can see her name in mugwort's Latin name, *Artemisia vulgaris.*

Most of these plants can be gathered around the same time in the summer, depending on where you reside. Harvest your herbs with respect. Make a spiritual connection to the energy of each plant, and ask permission to harvest it. When I first learned this, I was studying witchcraft as a science and thought

it was silly. In the shaman's world, everything is alive. Everything has spirit. These are not mindless ingredients to a laboratory potion. They are spirit helpers. If you don't get the blessing of the plant spirits, their magick will not be fully present in the herbs you pick.

Many magickally oriented plant harvesters will leave an offering for the plant spirit, a symbol of the sacred exchange between the human and green worlds. Tradition says to bury three coins at the base of the plant or tree, or pour a libation, a ritual offering of ale, mead, wine, or beer. Many modern herbalists leave a strand of hair, spit, or pure healing energy. Spit always struck me as rude, but nothing is more precious than your living water. An action is only disrespectful if you perform it with disrespect. If I'm carrying a water bottle, I will share my water with the plants. I also love visualizing energy or using Reiki healing energy on the plant. I think that energy and water are more useful to the plant than most other offerings.

Once you have the herbs you desire, get ready to make a bundle (Figure 5). Bundles can be mixed with all the herbs just listed or with a few favorites. They can even be single-herb bundles, such as a bundle of lavender. My favorite consists of mugwort, juniper, white pine, and lavender.

Gather a small bundle together, four to six inches long. Take all-natural cotton thread and starting at the top, lay the thread down the length of the bundle. You can match your thread color to the magickal intentions for your herbs. I like white or purple. At the bottom, spiral the thread around the bundle and then up the length of the bundle, to the top. At the top you can tie the start of the thread with the end. Make sure it's wrapped tight. As the herbs dry, they will compress, and the spaces in between will allow air to get in and keep the bundle burning. In a few weeks, it will be dry and ready to use. Make several bundles when the herbs are fresh so you will have them year round.

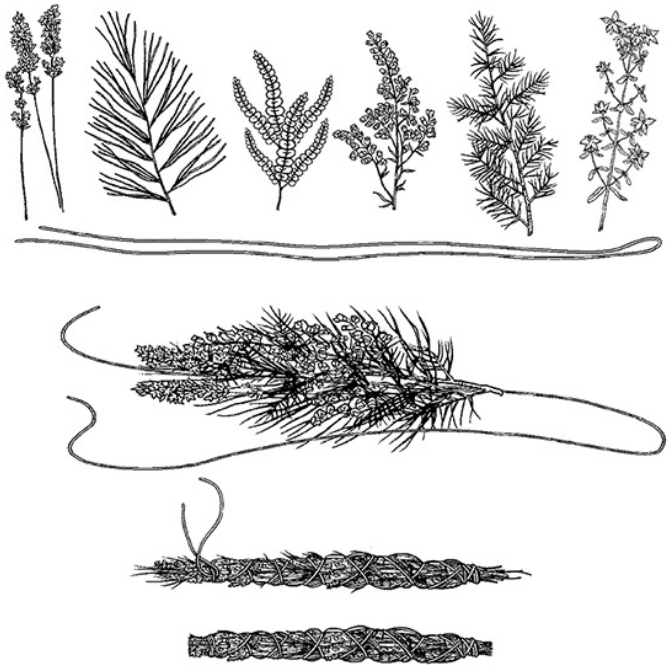


Figure 5: *Smudge Bundles*

To use a smudge bundle, first bless and consecrate the herb. Hold it in both hands and feel your energy mingle with its energy. Place your intention into it. You can say something like this out loud or silently to yourself:

I charge these herbs to create protection and sacred space. So mote it be.

Hold it at one end and light the other in a flame. Let the end catch fire, and after a few moments either blow or fan out the flames with a feather so the herb smolders with embers and begins to smoke. Usually you can extinguish the smudge bundle by pressing it into the flameproof vessel or a bowl of sand, but sometimes the inner part of the bundle catches fire and will continue to burn until done.

If you don't want to go to the trouble of making a "witchy" smudge bundle, you can use commercially prepared sage smudge sticks, traditional incense sticks, incense cones, or powdered incense on self-igniting charcoal in a flameproof vessel with the same effect. If smoke is an issue, many metaphysical supply stores carry "smokeless sage" spray bottles, which are simply a mixture of water, alcohol, and sage essential oil in a spray bottle. You can use the same idea with other cleansing essential oils, such as lavender. Experiment. If you don't want to do this sacred space smudging ritual with any herbs, you can do it with intention only.

Shamanic Smudging Ritual

Start by taking a few deep breaths to center yourself, and hold your intention of creating sacred space. Make sure you have at least an arm's length of space around you in all directions. Face your power direction. I start in the north. If using smudge, light your herb or incense and let it smoke. If not, just use your arms for the motion. I usually hold my herb or incense in my right hand because it is my dominant, power hand. Use the one that is most comfortable for you.

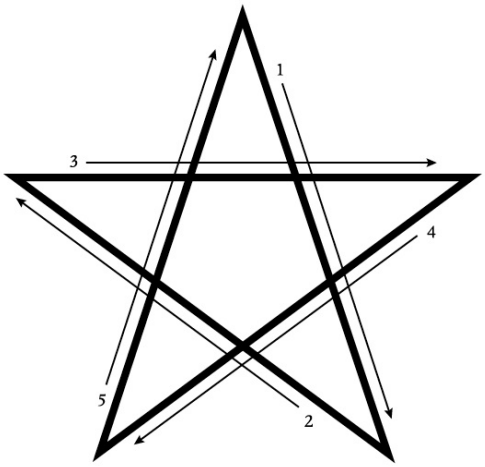


Figure 6: *Invoking Pentagram*

Using fluid, ritualistic motions, hold your smudge out to the north and say:

To the powers of the north.

Hold your smudge out to the east and say:

To the powers of the east.

Hold your smudge out to the south and say:

To the powers of the south.

Hold your smudge out to the west and say:

To the powers of the west.

Hold your smudge above you and say:

To the powers above.

Hold your smudge to the ground and say:

To the powers below.

Hold your smudge to the left side and say:

To those on my left.

Hold your smudge to the right side and say:

To those on my right.

Hold your smudge in front of your chest and say:

And to those in my heart, I welcome you.

Draw a banishing pentagram before you and say:

I banish all harmful, unwanted energies from this space.

Draw an invoking pentagram (Figure 6) before you and say:

I call forth all helpful, healing energies to this space.

Hold out your smudge at arm's length, and trace three clockwise circles in smoke around you. You are not casting a circle, but you are purifying the entire space. Say:

I stand in the center and create a sacred space. So mote it be.

Stand in the center and take a deep breath. Feel yourself oriented in the sacred space of all nine directions around you.

Through the use of sacred smoke and orienting yourself in the directions, you create a magickal space that will align your power and create blessings and protection. Use this ritual before any exercise or journey in this book. You can do it daily to cleanse yourself and your home. You can do it to cleanse a space before casting a traditional witch's circle. You can do it before any magickal working.

Creating sacred space, however you choose to do it, is a fundamental component in the training of a shamanic witch. Learn both traditional circle casting and more primal forms of creating sacred space, such as the shamanic smudging ritual. If the smudging ritual above doesn't resonate with you, use the basic concept of honoring the directions to guide the creation of your own ritual. Change the format and words to make it something that works for you.

[contents]

4

The Role of the Shamanic Witch

The role of the Stone Age witch and the role of the tribal shaman are not all that different. Each comes from a common ancestry. Each is a branch on the sacred Tree of Life. But modern people, and even modern witches, are usually not familiar with the role of the shaman in an individual's life and in the overall community.

Most modern spell books and craft training don't delve deeply into the community role of the tribal witch. Many who come to witchcraft, particularly on a solitary or eclectic path, arrive believing that witchcraft is about power. Yes, power is developed on the path of the witch, but why?

The witch's power is to serve the greater good. Sometimes that power is expressed in creating a balanced life, done through spellcraft. You cannot see the bigger picture, your role in the greater good, if you are lacking the things you need in life. Spellcraft can aid you in getting the things you need. Once you satisfy your basic needs and desires, you can focus your power on broader pursuits. The power is used for self-discovery. If we are all connected in this web of life, through the divine mind, or Great Spirit, when one of us heals, the greater whole also heals. Most importantly, with experience in introspection and creation, the lessons of the inner and outer temples, the power is used to serve the community.

Service

Through exercising our skills, witches are really servants. We are caretakers of the world and the community. We know our actions affect everything, so every action is an opportunity for magickal healing. That is at the heart of shamans and medicine people of the tribal world, and must be reclaimed by modern witches. Through their service to the whole, shamanic practitioners developed many roles. Originally these roles were under the sole archetype of the wise

one, the cunning man or woman of the tribe.

In modern society, we have specialists who serve us. We look at individual roles, individual parts of the body, or individual symptoms rather than looking at the whole. Instead of consulting one person who has knowledge of our body, mind, and spirit, we seek out three separate people. In truth they are all linked, and our turning to holistic medicine and our research into the mind-body-spirit connection reflect our intuitive desire to seek out these older forms of healing. Because our world looks at the pieces of the whole, we have filled the various roles of the shaman by creating specialists. It is through these roles that we weave together a new image of the modern shamanic witch.

Mystic

The role of the mystic is the image of the shaman or witch that is most familiar to us. Shamans develop the ability to speak with spirits, with the land, and with the ancestors. They are on a personal quest for self-discovery, purification, and, ultimately, what some would call enlightenment. Mystics are found in every culture and religion, from the yogi to the monk. They are marked by their differences, their separation from the mainstream community. Shamans, too, are separated from the community they serve. They sometimes live in isolation, on the edge of the tribe. Many see them as mad. Although our modern society equates madness with dysfunction, the lines blur around the shaman who can see and do things that most people cannot. Mystics take time alone to understand and study their relationship with the divine and the world around them. Spending time in isolation allows them to develop abilities that seem amazing to those in traditional society. Here we have the image of the hedge witch, slightly wild, living alone in the forest, waiting for others to come to her.

Becoming a mystic in any culture is usually more of a calling, an imperative, than a personal choice. The choice comes in accepting the call or not. Shamans can be thrust into the role through sickness. An illness, such as a fevered dream, induces a near-deathlike trance. When the spirit leaves the body to enter the other worlds, the shaman meets with spirits and partners with them, learning the healing craft. The shaman returns decidedly different than he was prior to the illness and is now ready to enter into service. Mystics are called by the spirits, by the divine, to enter into some form of service as healers, teachers, prophets, and inspirations to others.

Minister

Working with the spirit world has a decidedly religious tone in tribal societies, where religion is not hallmarked by dogma or institutions. In tribal societies, religion, cultural identity, art, and entertainment are all tied together. In the days before modern secular entertainment, all songs and stories had a purpose for the tribe, marking their history, beliefs, practices, and religion. The shamans act as religious leaders. Tales of their spirit journeys become the seeds of stories and myths. The shaman acts as the bridge between the spiritual worlds and the physical world, leading rituals, chants, and dances. Shamans bless the planting, bless the hunt, and lead rites of passage as children enter adulthood, couples join together, and adults enter elderhood and later cross to the realm of the ancestors. Shamans fulfill the religious role of minister, priest, or priestess in their community.

Community Leader

In some tribes, the shamans act as community leaders and elders. Their wisdom and counsel are respected. They aid the tribe in social decisions and future planning. By being slightly apart from the tribe, they are more detached from the issues at hand. From this step back, they can see the whole of the situation, and not just its individual parts. Ideally, if they are listening to their inner wisdom and the advice of the spirit world, they will not be politically or socially biased, or self-motivated. Though it is tempting to idealize all shamanic practitioners, they are like all people, and have their virtues and flaws. They don't always live up to the ideal, but usually their counsel is sound and their voice is heeded.

Psychologist

Most belief systems in shamanism have complex associations with various parts of the mind or soul, a form of soul psychology. Through exploring the spirit worlds, they explore themselves, learning fundamental truths about how humans act and react. Shamans can then give advice that may seem psychological in nature to help people with their relationships, including the relationship between the client and his or her own soul. Though many modern ministers are trained in forms of counseling, and many modern counselors are sensitive to their client's spiritual needs, shamans play the role of both psychologist and minister. The tribal shaman's counsel will not be clinical in the

way modern psychology is, and treatments may include ritual, energy work, and plant medicine, along with talk therapy, but the roots of understanding the mind come from practical shamanic practice. Many counselors who have studied witchcraft with me have told me that the shamanic information they learned in class was more helpful on a practical level than much of their formal psychology training because it looked at the whole person.

Healer

The role of the healer is a broad one in tribal society. I think there are a lot of wonderful things about Western allopathic medicine, with all its specialists, but there is also a need to see the whole individual. Metaphysical healers look to heal the whole person, not just the symptoms. Body, mind, energy, and spirit must all be brought into balance for true healing to be effective. Though most Western medicine practitioners would shun mystical practices for healing illness, the roots of our modern medicine derive from shamanism.

Shamans and witches were the first herbalists. Researchers using the scientific method think early tribal herbalists originally learned their herbal medicine through trial and error, passing on bits of lore to their students about what plants cure and what plants kill. But if a witch or shaman accidentally poisoned a tribe-mate, would anyone go back? I wouldn't. No, they learned much of their art both from watching animals and from speaking directly with the plant spirits themselves. Shamans practiced a form of first aid and learned to set bones. Their psychic ability to perceive the parts of the body and organs helped in these skills. The ancient priests, priestesses, and mystical philosophers of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece learned a lot about human anatomy and medicine from their rites of the dead. Evidence suggests the practice of brain surgery in the early civilizations of both the Middle East and Central America, and you can bet it was practiced by the heirs of the shamanic traditions. Healing arts, physical and spiritual, are the hallmarks of shamanic practice.

Modern Shamanism and Witchcraft

Although we've explored the role of the shaman in tribal communities, what good does that do the modern witch? Certain tribal fashion trends hark back to tribal times, but we are no longer living in a tribal society, and the role of the

shaman is not understood nor necessarily welcomed today. If we desire to reclaim these traditions and incorporate them into our practice, how do we come to terms with our role of service when we have no tribe to serve? We have many tribes to belong to and to serve. We just need to expand our search and see what is truly around us.

The first tribe we have is a tribe of one. As we care for the tribe, we must care for ourselves. Witches walk a balanced path, and we must care for ourselves, both physically and spiritually. Before we even think of presenting our skills to others, we must make sure we are on stable ground. Many witches are shaky—physically, mentally, and spiritually. They are attracted to the craft because they know it is a path of healing, and whether they know it or not, they are seeking healing for themselves first and foremost. They can have grand visions of being a community healer or leader right off the bat, but the first step is to work on the self.

Our next tribe is our family. We can define family by blood relationships, or by spiritual relationships, what many call a family by spirit or a family by choice. We can share our gifts with our family, but only if they desire them. Though shamanism, witchcraft, spells, and meditation are wonderful tools, not everybody wants to be involved with them. But when they do, you have an excellent opportunity to help your family tribe, even if it only involves providing more information. It is difficult to minister to family, and it is not really our place to mix the roles of our relationships with family members. We can always be both healer and family member simultaneously. We can offer them tools for their own exploration and support them by sharing our journey.

Witches have a pagan community to serve. Our community of mystics starts with a coven or gathering circle. Though it can be very tough to find like-minded individuals in more conservative parts of the world, many areas have thriving pagan communities in which to gather. Again, as with your family, don't assume that you have the cures for everybody. First work on yourself, and get to know the community to see how you can best serve. Your role in serving this community might not be that of the shaman or healer, since many in the coven will be developing similar skills. Some witches think of themselves as the priestesses and priests of the greater pagan community. Pagans would be the "tribe," and witches would be the shamans or mystics. Most modern pagans wouldn't agree with this assessment, however, feeling they are just as mystical

but choose not to use the word witch or Wiccan as part of their identity. As you make your connections in community, you will find what role you will play in these ever growing “tribes.”

The tribe I most identify with is the global tribe. The term “global village” has been used a lot lately, referring to our advances in global communication that hopefully stimulate a sense of global rather than factional identity. The New Age we are slowly entering is referred to as the Age of Aquarius. Aquarian energy is marked by a sense of universal brotherhood/sisterhood, a sense of global humanity and social consciousness. Aquarius teaches us at the highest level that we are all in it together, not just all people, but all life on this planet and beyond.

I work to serve the global tribe. Many of us do. Some find their identity in social, political, economic, or environmental causes. I have found my calling at this time in my life on a mystical level, by helping raise the mass consciousness of all people on the planet. One of the best ways we can all do this is by raising our own consciousness. The more we heal as individuals, taking care of our own issues, angers, fears, and inner conflicts, the more we heal the entire world. Think of your own healing as an act of sympathetic magick. “As above, so below” is my motto. The changes I make within myself will be reflected as changes in the world. That is one of the best ways to bring us into this New Age. Then, as you develop yourself, you can help inspire others to change and raise their consciousness, not through force, but by example. Grandmother Twylah, an elder of the Seneca Nation, said this beautifully in the documentary *Full Circle* (1993), the final part of Donna Reed’s *Women and Spirituality* trilogy on earth-based and women’s spirituality: “I get a big kick out of people coming around and they’ll say, ‘what can we do to heal Mother Earth?’ ‘Heal yourself’ we tell them.”

The Ethics of the Shamanic Witch

Shamanic practice has no dogmatic institutions. Traditions are passed down from elder to student. There are ethics and vows agreed upon when working with certain spirits and deities, but there are no universal rules that govern every aspect of the practice.

Traditional Wicca is governed by a few simple principles. There are many

philosophies and codes, but none are universally accepted by all pagans. Two principles are the most common among Wiccan traditions. The first is the Law of Three, known as the Law of Return. It states that what you send out comes back to you threefold. It means that whatever energy you send out into the universe, by your thoughts, words, and deeds, will return to its source—you—stronger than when it left. This has its advantages and drawbacks. Many think of it as a moral code. If you do "bad" things, bad things will happen to you. If you do "good" things, you will be rewarded. Though it can seem like that, the energy is not moral, it's just following the laws of nature. Gravity doesn't reward or punish you. If you throw something up, it will fall back down. If you trip and fall, it seems like gravity is punishing you, but we know it's not.

When you do spellcraft, you are sending out energy that seems insubstantial—a visualization, a chant, the light of a candle—but when it returns, it returns to you stronger than before, as a reality. In that sense, the Law of Three works in your favor, because it helps you create the things you want.

The Wiccan Rede is another guiding principle of Wicca. It's not an absolute law, but it is great advice: "An' it harm none, do what ye Will." On the first level, it is about doing what you want and living by the consequences of those actions. If you harm none, you will receive no harm. Practically speaking, this is very hard to do. Tough choices can harm others. But if you hold this as your guiding principle, you will be less likely to cause harm and will always think about the consequences of your actions. On a second level, it is about merging your personal, or ego's, will and desire with your divine will, your life's purpose. The true path of magick is to discover and fulfill your true purpose on this planet. Magickal actions help you find that role.

The world of modern shamanic witchcraft can also be guided by these two basic principles, but there are some others to consider as well. I feel that each witch needs to create his or her own code of ethics and principles to practice and live by. The role of service to the divine, to the greater good, is forefront in my mind. Shamanic practitioners, like all who practice any form of magick, sometimes start to confuse the power to do great things with their own personal power. The power is from our partnership with nature, with the spirit worlds and with the divine. We do it together. Remaining humble while developing these gifts is a primary aspect of my own code. Don't take yourself so seriously. Be disciplined, but have fun. Learn to laugh at yourself.

Working magick and healing only those who want help is another key. If someone doesn't want to heal or transform, or if the illness is serving a purpose, consciously or unconsciously, the shamanic healer and the client are not in true partnership for this work. Only through partnership, through facilitating the healing process, can we help others heal. As with our family tribe, and all those we serve, we must be vigilant not to thrust our beliefs and help on those who do not want it. Many mystics find something that works so well personally that they immediately want to share it with all their loved ones. Though well-intentioned, they may come across as overly zealous. I know when I learn something new, anything from a new meditation to a new vitamin supplement, and I find it really works for me, I want everyone to try it. It's taken me a long time to learn that my new tools are not right for everybody. We find the tools we need. If, in sharing my experience, a loved one asks for more information, I am happy to share it. If they don't ask, I just leave it at that.

Once you learn the techniques outlined in this book, you might be tempted to do a shamanic journey for everybody, and connect them with their spirits, animals, and messages. Since shamanism is not usually valued and understood by mainstream society, most people will not appreciate your efforts, so make sure they are actively welcome before you bring your point of view to another. When you begin your training, work on your own healing and development before you seek to counsel others. With greater experience, you will know when and where it is appropriate to share your gifts.

Learning to value my own talents and learning the power of the exchange of energy between two people have been a great part of my own healing process. When you offer a service to others, they must value and honor it in order for them to truly benefit from it. In many traditional societies, the shaman fulfilled a function and was taken care of by the tribe. Others traded goods for their services. Old tales of the European wise ones and seers included visitors bringing them gifts of bread, meat, and other foodstuffs in exchange for their advice and help. Ministers and clergy are taken care of by the institutions supported by their congregations.

Modern witches have none of these support systems, and many do not need them if they fulfill other roles in society. But when someone gives of their time

and effort to help another, an exchange is helpful to set boundaries and prevent the “client” from taking advantage of the practitioner. Though many feel it’s taboo to charge money for services, and some traditions of witchcraft have vows specifically against this, others feel it’s appropriate depending on the circumstances, particularly if you are qualified to offer your services professionally. Though you may be tempted to help everybody, all the time, with no energy exchanges, this can be quite draining personally, spiritually, and financially.

Exchanges do not necessarily have to involve money, though this can be an easier medium to use. Exchanges can involve food, gifts, handcrafted items, or other services. I’ve known practitioners to exchange time for a client weeding their garden. But if you do healing and counseling work full-time, you will only need so many weeders and then eventually will need to pay the rent or buy groceries. Since our society is no longer truly tribal, we can’t barter with the bank, store, or landlord. In the end, the exchange is fair if both parties agree to it and it leads to a balanced relationship.

Facing the Shadow

One of the greatest keys to claiming your shamanic identity is facing your shadow. Many shamanic initiations, experiences, and tests that occur on the inner planes are frightening. They test your mettle and present you with aspects of life that perhaps you’d rather not see.

Some paths of shamanism are heroic paths where we must act like spiritual warriors, bravely facing our inner enemies. Others see shamanic witchcraft as the path of the wise woman, the loving mother. We must heal by identifying the parts of ourselves that have become disenfranchised, and then gently welcome them back to the whole with compassion and love. Both traditions are needed for self-healing.

Fundamental to all shamanic traditions, and really all personal mystical traditions, is facing the dark. Before we claim our deeper powers and abilities, we must face the inner dark. Our psychic energies are strongly influenced by our thoughts, emotions, and intentions. Empowerment comes with greater awareness of our intentions, conscious and unconscious. Empowerment comes with a greater mastery of our thoughts and emotions. Thoughts and emotions

are energy, and shamanic witches are truly transformers of energy. Through partnering with the unseen energies, we create change. The first energies we must partner with are our own internal energies. Without that partnership, we are of very little use to anybody else.

We must face our fears. Shamans make friends with the dark. Witches make friends with the dark as well. Many of our most loving and healing goddesses and gods are fierce Underworld deities. As healers, we go into the dark shadows of others, so we must first learn to make friends with our own shadow. Like the torchbearer images of Hecate, we bring light to the darkness. We bring awareness into the unknown. Once you turn over the stones and find that the "monsters" beneath are not as bad you feared, you can help others do the same.

The shadow consists of all the parts of you that you'd rather not face. The shadow is not evil. Many people equate light with good and dark with evil, but the shadow really is what we have repressed. There is no real moral judgment to it, but it feels like it. The shadow is all the anger, fear, jealousy, shame, and guilt that we have not processed. Energy is constantly in motion, and if emotions are energy, then they have to go somewhere and do something. Denied emotions compose the shadow.

I think of the shadow as a closet in the back of your psyche. It's the closet we all hate to clean. Perhaps it's more like the monster we fear in the closet, but the closet is where it starts, acting like its incubator or womb. Into the closet go all the things we don't want to take responsibility for right now.

In the closets of the physical world we store the remnants of our past that we don't have the courage to face and get rid of, or the things we are simply too lazy to put in the proper place. Metaphysically, it's the same thing. We store all the thoughts and emotions, all the unacknowledged aspects of ourselves, and all the judgments we've picked up from others. We either didn't want to deal with them or we didn't know how to, so we put them all together in this spiritual closet. Eventually, we have to go into the closet. Something forces us to go in. Or we put one last thing inside as the closet is fit to burst, and it all comes tumbling down upon us. The shadow can manifest as an emotional crisis, personal upheaval, nervous breakdown, depression, physical illness, or even shamanic awakening. Eventually it builds to the point of breaking and must be faced.

Many spiritual traditions, witchcraft included, say that we create our own reality, or something to that equivalent. I know my first response to that statement was, “No, I don’t. I wouldn’t have created this.” It’s a hard statement to make to people who are suffering from physical illness, emotional problems, poverty, or abuse. I’ve been met with many skeptical questions when saying we create our own reality, the same doubts I had myself. If you are in pain, why would you create that? Spiritual traditions give many answers, ranging from learning “life lessons” to paying off “karmic debt.” I have found that the unwanted aspects of our reality are often created by our shadow self, the repressed aspects of ourselves that we are not consciously aware of.

Energy is neutral. What you put out comes back to you amplified. There is no moral judgment to it, other than the judgment we humans place on it. We usually equate experiences that feel pleasurable or go easily as “good,” and experiences that are difficult, painful, or trying as “bad,” just like we label nature. Most people think of a clear, sunny day as “good” and a rainy day as “bad,” but most earth-oriented people honor both blessings, for without the rain there would be no plants and no people.

The emotions that compose the shadow are neutral, too, but because we judge them as being “bad,” they get stuck. When enough of these emotions gather together, they begin to take form and create an identity all their own. This part of the self has been disconnected from the basic healing, loving life force that the rest of your being enjoys. The shadow self wants to be reconnected to that source. The shadow really wants to heal, but it’s the part of us that is hurt and in pain. When we are hurt, we are less likely to ask for the help we need and want, so we maneuver and manipulate. We are afraid of being hurt and rejected again. The shadow lashes out at us and blames us for this repressed role. The feelings of being hurt and rejected are a part of the shadow self too.

The shadow uses what energy it does have to get our attention. We identify with the conscious self as the creator of our life. The thoughts, words, and actions we send out are magickal creations, even if we do not do traditional magick. They return to us. But the shadow self is also creating. It radiates the thoughts, feelings, and unconscious programs that make up its being. The energy of all our selves creates our reality. Our perception of and reaction to

these situations also contribute to our reality, our personal worldview.

Psychologically, you can think of the shadow I describe as the unconscious aspects of yourself. The parts that lie beneath the surface, unknown to the conscious self and acting as our self-saboteur, are the shadow. Some people are self-destructive. We recognize it when we see it in others, because their personal saboteur doesn't live in our blind spots. We see other people's blind spots, their unconscious zones, quite easily. But our own blind spots are invisible to us. Even when they are pointed out to us, we still miss them unless we are truly ready to bring them into our conscious awareness.

If you have repressed anger yet still find yourself drawn into situations that test your anger, it's because the anger of your shadow is drawing these experiences to you. Similar vibrations gather together. Anger, conscious or unconscious, can draw more anger. If you processed the anger, you would be letting go of it and less likely to create angry situations in your life. Experiences of poverty are the result of repressed feelings of lack and unworthiness. Illnesses and injuries are expressions of a fear of death, pain, and other emotions. Each part of the body is associated with different emotions and states of mind, as found in the chakra system (*ITOW,* chapter 11). Holistic healing recognizes that the physical body parallels the emotional one. When you don't process energy in your emotional body, it eventually precipitates down into your physical body as a physical block, manifesting as illness or injury.

As we claim more magickal power to be of greater service to the community, we must be diligent to clear the unconscious patterns and programs so we may always be conscious of our creations. Failure to do so can create a danger for yourself and others. This is why a common landmark in all shamanic traditions is facing the shadow and your own mortality. Without this experience, you cannot progress further.

When you become conscious of the shadow energy and actively work with the shadow self, partnering with it, making peace with it and eventually integrating its lessons and energy into your personal identity, your life changes. You seem to flow with the tides of life much easier than before.

Shadow work is a constant process of reevaluating and healing, but with each level of awareness you notice a shift in your relationship to your reality. Like peeling an onion, you get closer to the true center. You begin to manifest

your purpose with clarity and insight. You feel more comfortable, safe, and peaceful in the world. Your unconscious self is creating less and less of your life, so you encounter fewer unpleasant surprises. It doesn't mean that the unexpected doesn't happen or that difficulties don't arise, but you will approach these situations differently and learn to flow with them. You will reclaim your shadow's power and truly begin to create your own reality all the time.

Preparing for Shadow Work

The main focus of this book is to prepare you for working with the shadow through teaching you the core shamanic techniques intertwined with modern witchcraft traditions. After these four introductory chapters, each subsequent chapter will be a lesson for a year-and-a-day course of healing and transformation. After learning the techniques, you will focus on a practice called distilling the shadow, a method to bring the unconscious into the conscious. It is an initiation of sorts because it is a trial. It is a test. Shamanic rituals are ordeals, in the best sense of the word. Ultimately it will bring you into a new beginning, a new relationship with yourself.

As each of the books in the Temple of Witchcraft series focuses on an element, this third volume focuses on water and the healing of the emotional self. Part of making friends with the shadow is making friends with all your emotions, those you label "good" and those you label "bad," along with everything in between. Water is the power of emotion, and its highest form is divine love, the unconditional Perfect Love of the Goddess and God. It is the power of this Perfect Love that really heals the shadow.

Shamanic work can be very powerful in bringing up emotions, particularly in the later distilling-the-shadow training. You might find it difficult to continue with this process as emotions bubble to the surface. It's like boiling water. Add this emotional "heat" to your mix, and you bring things to a boil. You might want to put it all away. That is truly a shadow reaction—repressing rather than facing the emotion and processing it to completion. You may even feel that the universe is conspiring against you to make you stop, that the gods are giving you signs that it's too much. Though you must honor your own personal limits, usually such "signs" are creations of your shadow, pitfalls on the path designed to stop you. The shadow simultaneously wants to be healed and yet doesn't

want to give up its power and identity. There is fear in change. A big part of our identity, conscious and unconscious, comes from our wounds and traumas. We usually don't give them up without a fight. Fortunately there are several things you can do to facilitate the healing process.

Simply getting in touch with the element of water can be very helpful over the course of this year-and-a-day training. Drink lots of water. As our physical body holds on to physical toxins, our emotional body holds on to emotional toxins, the components of the shadow. As we cleanse one, we cleanse the other. Giving your physical body the support of fresh, clean water can make a world of difference. Engaging in other purifying processes, like ritual bathing, steam baths, saunas, regular exercise, short periods of detoxifying diets, or herbal healing regimes, is also helpful.

Journaling is an excellent way to keep track of your own growth as well as have a private place to vent your feelings. In chapter 4 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft,* I suggested outlines for journaling three pages a day in your Book of Shadows or a separate book. This is an excellent way to experience things you might be tempted to repress. The meditations and affirmations outlined in *ITOW* are also helpful in this regard. Take quiet time out to meditate, relax, and get in touch with yourself. I found the loving affirmations, such as saying "I love myself" three times every day while distilling the shadow, to be extremely helpful.

Seek healing facilitation if you need it. Find whatever modalities best suit you. Perhaps while on this path you should consult a shamanic practitioner, if available in your area. See an energy healer. Work with a tarot counselor when questioning your path. Also, don't discount the benefits of traditional healing and therapy. Many more therapists today are open to unusual forms of spirituality and would be willing to hear about the benefits and challenges of your practice and how it influences your daily life. There's a tendency among aspiring witches, mages, and shamans to feel they have to do it all themselves, and what kind of witch are they if they can't figure out all the answers? If we want to be of value to a community, then we must find others in the community whom we value and can go to in times of need. Don't feel you have to go it alone.

Emotional Training

As a culture, we identify greatly with our emotions. In fact, we often think we *are* our emotions. Our emotions are an energy that flows through us. They change as long as we don't hold on to them, causing them to stagnate. One of the great lessons of the Western magickal traditions is the use of tools to remind us that the elements within us are tools. We hold an athame, wand, pentacle, and chalice to remind us that the elements within are tools. The aspects of air (the mind), fire (our will), earth (our body), and water (our emotions) are tools we all have. They are not "us." Our true self, our spirit or higher self, is what "holds" these tools in this lifetime. Our higher self uses the mind, will, body, and emotions like a witch uses ritual tools. We are truly our higher self, and not our emotions, mind, will, or body. They are just tools. Many people in our modern society get confused, and think they are one of these four aspects. People identify particularly with the mind or emotions as the true self, when the true self is much more than any one of these four components.

The language we use reinforces our erroneous thoughts, and just as it can work for our benefit, with affirmations and spells, it can work against us when we are not conscious of our choice of words. We identify so much with our emotions. We say, "I am happy," "I am sad," or "I am afraid." With that language, we identify so greatly with the emotion, linking our primal sense of self and identity, symbolized by "I am," with a transitory emotion. When you feel a difficult emotion, and think, "I am [that emotion]," the feeling doesn't go away. Those cultures with a great awareness of the magick of language would never say such things. The Irish, inheritors of the great Celtic traditions, would generally not use such "I am" statements. Though most wouldn't understand why, they have unconsciously inherited this wisdom. It's simply a part of the culture. Their use of language is more precise. They would say, "I feel sad," or even better, "A great sadness has come upon me." That language doesn't identify your primal core with an emotion. It acknowledges what is being felt. There is no denial or repression, but the language suggests that it is simply a feeling. Then another feeling can move through and take its place.

When using affirmations, you are consciously choosing to identify with a quality you want to manifest. If you are not doing affirmations or other magickal work, be very careful about your use of "I am" statements in daily life. Ask

yourself if they are helping you or harming you. If they are harming you, neutralize them (*ITOW,* chapter 8).

In difficult situations where you overly identify with an emotion that surfaces during this training, use the following technique to help you process and release the energy of the difficult emotion. It doesn't necessarily make the emotion or issue completely disappear, but it prevents the emotion from getting stuck and being repressed. To practice, you will consciously conjure up the feeling of something unresolved, but in the future it can be used as emotions surface spontaneously.

Exercise 3

Emotional Body Training

1. For this exercise, conjure up a strong emotion from your past. Think of a particularly difficult situation or relationship that will bring up some reaction in you. Focus on emotional patterns that you consider harmful or difficult rather than happy.

2. Bring your attention to your body. Focus on the sensation that the emotion conjures up in your body. Don't analyze it or try to mentally figure it out. Simply scan your body, bringing your attention to your head and then down your entire body. Where do you feel the emotion the strongest? There may be more than one place.

3. Disassociate the memory or situation from your bodily sensation. Don't worry about how you will resolve the situation, or worry about what you regret or would do differently. You can worry about resolving it later. Just focus on the sensation, the feeling itself. Characterize the feeling. How would you describe it? Is it painful? Does it have a temperature? Does it feel electric? Magnetic? Pins and needles? Heaviness? Just describe it to yourself. It probably won't feel good, but that's okay because you will be releasing it soon.

4. As you breathe, will this energy from whatever part of the body it is in to move into your chest. Feel it move. As you command, it will move because all your attention is on it. Imagine your heart chakra opening with green or green and pink light. Feel the power of love in your heart. Feel the energy

of your trauma pass through the gates of your heart, transmuting it. All uncomfortable sensations cease, and the energy passes out of your heart like a beam of pure light, transmuting into divine love and beaming out to the universe. The love you send out will return to you threefold.

5. Afterward you can do anything else you need to do to restore your inner balance. You can do the Shamanic Smudging Ritual in chapter 3 to cleanse and smudge yourself. You can do a chakra balancing exercise (*ITOW*, exercise 25), or you can simply rest or take a long bath.

Keep this exercise in your magickal toolbox to use whenever you need it. Whether you're at work, home, or anywhere else, you can use this tool to subtly clear your emotions and stop them from getting stuck. You can use it to go back through past experiences and help clear them. Try one situation at a time. Some people make the mistake of trying to conquer all past traumas in one evening. Don't do that. Take it slow and easy, and simply keep this tool in mind as the year-and-a-day training brings up emotions to handle one by one. This isn't a long-term healing technique, but a temporary measure to get you through difficult times in this healing process.

The Shadow Promise

The core part of shadow work is creating an environment to bring your shadow self out into the open, into your consciousness. Although shadow work can be difficult to experience, the rewards are well worth it, and after the first time you face down and stalk your fears, nothing else will truly scare you with the same intensity.

Distilling the shadow involves creating a volatile situation on purpose, under controlled conditions, with the ritual and training to create a boundary, a zone of healing. This process creates an order and provides stability for the forces of the shadow. Being neutral energies, they can then be used to fulfill your life's purpose, but not until they are acknowledged, recognized, and put to work.

Some mystics make the mistake of trying to kill the shadow. You can't. Imagine an actual shadow. It grows and shrinks with the light of day. Only at night, in darkness, does your own shadow disappear. You cannot get rid of it permanently. You can learn to integrate it in a healthy way, yet it is still present. If you treat your shadow like an enemy and truly get into an

antagonistic relationship with it, you can do great damage, separating from it even more. Some warrior traditions “stalk” their unwanted thoughts and emotions, like a hunter, but the spirit of the process is like the true spiritual warrior who fights to defend and create. They compete to better themselves, but do not seek to annihilate their shadow by looking at it as separate and alien. The warriors acknowledge that the shadow is a part of the greater whole, and a peace or partnership with it must be reached.

The process of ordering and focusing our shadow energy, bringing it to a boil at the surface of our consciousness, is volatile. We are confronted with situations that seem to unbalance us, but they are challenges to the heart of our shadow. The process of distillation, heating and purifying a substance to transform it, seems destructive at first. Part of the whole is being burned off as steam, but the substance is truly purified and perfected in the end.

In aryuvedic medicine, practitioners of this healing art sometimes prescribe a regime of substances to purposely unbalance the client. If a client is stuck and is not reaching a healthy balance through normal means, this more dramatic step is taken. Through this process of imbalance, everything in the client’s system is pushed over the edge, and a new dynamic balance can be reached, but only by inducing the trauma. At first this course of action seems like madness, but it’s a powerful process. Shadow work is much like this aryuvedic practice. Here we bring up powerful and seemingly destructive emotions, pushing our psyche into a state of trauma. Yet if we follow the regime of exercises through, the result is a level of even greater dynamic balance and spiritual awareness.

My friend Chris Giroux, who works with the shadow in a dark goddess tradition, once described the shadow as the compost heap. It’s like a container for all this waste and refuse. We put things we don’t want to deal with, our emotional garbage, into this pile. We try not to look at it, keeping it away from our daily paths. It sizzles and cooks, bringing to mind the fire associated with the word shaman. “The word shaman can be translated as meaning ‘to burn up, to set on fire’. . .” (*The Celtic Shaman,* John Matthews, p. 6). Eventually you have to go in there and take care of it, turning it over and dealing with the pile you have created. If you do that occasionally, you create a fertile compost that will nourish your spiritual seeds. But you have to have the courage to go in there and face it every so often, or it will explode.

I think of the shadow like mining coal. Though I'm not a big fan of actual coal as a source of fuel, symbolically it suits the shadow quite well. You start with a rock that is dark and dirty. You have to dig deep to get it. But coal can give us many gifts. If pressure is applied to coal over long periods of time, you have a diamond, pure and brilliant, reflecting light. Apply the right heat to it and you get fire, a fuel to bring light to the darkness. Something black brings light and warmth to the dark, cold night. I think of how dark the midnight sky is, with the stars, the giant balls of fuel being burned up. It is the darkness that teaches us to appreciate the light. The sky and the stars do not fight for dominance. One is not good and the other evil. They complement each other, and each serves a greater purpose. Our shadow serves a great purpose if we only acknowledge it.

Exercise 4

Shadow Promise Ritual

Set up your space for meditation or ritual. You can cast a magick circle if you desire, but it's not necessary. I prefer to create sacred space through the simple Shamanic Smudging Ritual covered in the previous chapter.

Next, write down the following intention, and prepare a space for reflection. You can use this as your model, but find the words that make the most sense to you. Make sure you have your intention slip, white candle, matches, and a flameproof vessel such as a cauldron for burning your intention slip.

> *I, [state your name], ask in the name of the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to acknowledge, heal, and partner with my shadow over the coming year and a day. I make this vow to my shadow and to myself. I ask for the guidance and help of the other worlds, from the spirits, guides, ancestors, and teachers who are correct for me. I ask that this occur with ease, grace, and gentleness, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.*

Dim all the lights. In fact, it is best to get as close to absolute darkness as possible. Have the candle and other materials within easy reach, perhaps on a table.

Start by reflecting on the dark. How does it make you feel? Are you comfortable in the dark, or uncomfortable? Have you ever had a fear of the

dark? Think about the primal dark, about how our ancestors couldn't just turn on all the lights in the house, and about how darkness was a big part of their lives, with only firelight to guide them.

Then reflect on your inner dark. Knowing what you now know about the shadow, what do you think could be lurking in your closet? Let whatever thoughts come to mind pass through you. Don't try to figure them out. Don't pass judgment. Like water, just let them flow.

After a short time, when you feel ready, light your candle. Bring light to your darkness. Reflect on the light penetrating the darkness. If you had a room of absolute light and one of absolute darkness, separated only by a doorway, when you opened the doorway, the light, not the darkness, would flow into the other room.

Then read the intention you wrote, and burn the slip. Dispose of the ashes in water. Release your space, and record your thoughts and feelings in your journal or Book of Shadows. Now begin your year-and-a-day journey into *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft*.

[contents]

5

Lesson One
The Worlds of the Shaman

What separates shamans from other magick practitioners is their ability to pierce the veil of spirit and travel into the realms of the gods. In essence, the shamans were the first mapmakers, but instead of marking out the territory of the terrestrial world, they notated the landmarks of the spirit worlds. Through mapping the spirit worlds, they understood the Principle of Correspondence —"As above, so below"—and found that the patterns of the spirit worlds reflected the patterns of the human psyche. Through their travels and exploration, the shamans learned to heal in all worlds.

Shamanic Cosmology

Shamans interpret the spiritual information received from a journey through their own cultural lens. Shamans in warm climates will be influenced by the temperature, humidity, flora, fauna, and terrain of their native home. Shamans in cold climates will similarly be influenced by their own surroundings. The visions of modern shamans are different from the myths of ancient shamans. Each time and place has its own point of view, and in fact each shaman has a unique point of view. No two people can stand in the exact same place, at the exact same time, and see the exact same thing. The same holds true for the spirit worlds, giving us a rich variety of mythology, ritual, and magick.

The worlds beyond us are really beyond shape and form in the way we conceive of them. When we move out of the physical plane, where we have shape, form, structure, and physical vessels, we move into a realm of energy, pattern, and fluidity. Our consciousness interprets these energy patterns, these spiritual realities and beings, based on things we are familiar with and can conceive of in the material reality. It is as if we are programmed to overlay an image onto the energy so we can interpret it and interact with it, since we are not programmed to work with raw energy itself.

Though the cultural diversity of each shaman's experience is enriching and wonderful, I am more struck by all the similarities between shamanic traditions across the world. Shamans come from such different backgrounds and have no direct contact with each other, yet they see similar patterns and themes. How is this possible? There must be some "truth" to what they are seeing, some universal pattern that applies to us all. They may interpret that truth slightly differently, but there are common threads. Two shamans can have very similar experiences. One from Siberia may see a spirit creature made of ice because ice and snow are part of his daily experience. Another from a warm climate may see the same type of spirit creature made of quartz crystal. Both are seeing a shiny, reflective creature—that is the common thread—but both shamans interpret it differently, based upon their cultural context. It is with these common threads of experience, in the things that are the same, that modern shamanic witches weave our patterns of universal truth.

It is from these seemingly universal patterns that we find the wisdom of all traditions, and find our core shamanism. Although this is a book of shamanic witchcraft and will naturally lean toward the traditions of European shamans, multicultural and modern images might occur in your own visions, as you are living in a modern, multicultural world. Here you will find the basic shamanic cosmology, a map of the well-known paths. With this map, you can find your own way.

The Cosmic Axis

Shamans experience a vertical reality. Most people only experience a horizontal reality, one of space and time. Shamanic wisdom reveals a cosmic axis that allows many dimensions of reality to be explored. Known by many names and shapes, this axis is the center of the world, in fact, the center of the universe, from which all things rotate. Shamans visit the center to travel anywhere in all the worlds.

The cosmic axis, or *axis mundi,* as it is sometimes called, is like a spire, a ladder linking all realms. In fact, some traditions view it as a ladder built to the heavens. The climbing image most prevalent among witches is the tree. The cosmic axis manifests as the tree of creation, the World Tree, from which all things grow and all things return to feed it. We are all sacred branches on the

tree, a part of creation. Just as many cultures saw this axis as a tree, they all saw it as a different tree, a tree sacred to the people of that culture, usually one abundant, rare, or particularly noteworthy.

To the Norse, the World Tree is usually depicted as an ash tree. Some consider it a European yew, which was sometimes referred to as a "needle ash," creating confusion among the modern pagans. The Norse World Tree is named Yggdrasil and plays a significant role in their mythology. It is a giant tree, larger than any you can conceive of in the mortal world, for it holds the spiritual realms of the Norse in its branches and roots.

The Celts have an intricate system of tree magick, and many trees were held sacred. Known as the ogham script, or tree alphabet, each character represents a specific tree with magickal and divinatory meanings (Figure 7). Their creation is attributed to the god Ogma, one of the Tuatha de Danaan of Irish legend. He is known as both warrior and poet, being the god of inspiration. The ogham system and its uses have been surrounded by modern controversy, so it can be difficult to understand what is historically accurate and traditional. Robert Graves' book *The White Goddess* brought the ogham to modern attention yet at the same time lies at the heart of the controversy. Now the symbol system is used much like runes or tarot cards to divine answers, and is used in charms for making magick. Originally it appeared to be more of a coded language used by the Druids and can be found on standing stones in Ireland and Britain.

Symbol	*Name*	*Tree*	*Species*	*Color*
	Beithe	Birch	*Betula alba*	White
	Luis	Rowan	*Pyrus* or *Sorbus aucuparia*	Gray
	Fearn	Alder	*Alnus glutinosa*	Crimson
	Saile	Willow	*Salix alba*	"Fine Colored"
	Nion/Nuin/Nin	Ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*	Clear
	Huathe	Hawthorn/ Whitethorn	*Crataegus oxyacantha*	"Terrible"
	Duir	Oak	*Quercus robur*	Black

				
	Tinne	Holly	*Ilex aquifolium*	Dark Gray
	Coll	Hazel	*Corylus avellana*	Brown

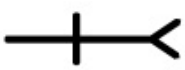
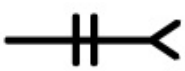
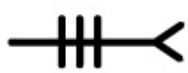
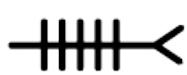
Symbol	*Name*	*Tree*	*Species*	*Color*
	Quert	Apple	*Malus sylvestris*	“Mouse Colored”
	Muinn	Vine	*Vitis vinifera*	Variegated
	Gort	Ivy	*Hedera helix*	Blue
	Ngetal	Reed or Broom	*Genista*	Glass Green
	Straif	Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*	“Bright Colored”
	Ruis	Elder	*Sambucus nigra*	Blood Red
	Ailm	Fir or Pine	*Abies alba* or *Pinus sylvestris*	Piebald
	Ohn	Gorse or Furze	*Ulex europaeus*	Dun
	Ur	Heather	*Calluna vulgaris*	“Resin Colored”
	Edad/Eadha	Aspen or White Poplar	*Populus termula*	Red
	Idad/Ioho	Yew	*Taxus baccata*	Pale White

Figure 7: *Ogham Alphabet*

Letter	*Planet*	*Modern Calendar Dates*	*Qualities*
B	Sun, Venus	Dec. 24–Jan. 20 2°–29° Capricorn	Energy, Vitality, the Power of Growth, New Beginnings, Birth, Purity
L	Uranus, Sun	Jan. 21–Feb. 17 0°–27° Aquarius	Protection, Insight, Healing, Inspiration, Inner Vitality, Spiritual Strength
F	Mars, Saturn	March 18–April 14 26° Pisces–23° Aries	Foundation, Strength, Shield, Inner Confidence, Inner Guidance

S	Moon	April 15–May 12 24° Aries–20° Taurus	Intuition, Psychic Powers, Cunning, Enchantment, Healing, Emotion
N	Neptune	Feb. 18–March 17 28° Aquarius–25° Pisces	Rebirth, Transformation, Happiness, Seeing the Big Picture, Universal Order
H	Chiron, Venus	May 13–June 9 21° Taurus–17° Gemini	Cleansing, Disruption, Obstacles, Love, Self-Control, Pleasure, Marriage
D	Jupiter	June 10–July 7 18° Gemini–14° Cancer	Truth, Knowledge, Endurance, Strength, Generosity, Nobility, Honesty
T	Earth, Mars	July 8–Aug. 4 15° Cancer–11° Leo	Justice, Tests, Fighting for Balance, Challenge, Strife, Compassion, Blood
C	Mercury	Aug. 5–Sept. 1 12° Leo–8° Virgo	Wisdom, Creativity, Communication, Divination, Meditation, Inspiration
Q	Venus	Aug. 5–Sept. 1 12° Leo–8° Virgo	Beauty, Eternity, Perfection, Wholeness, Regeneration, Eternal Youth, Gratitude

Letter	*Planet*	*Modern Calendar Dates*	*Qualities*
M	Neptune, Venus	Sept. 2–Sept. 29 9° Virgo–6° Libra	Introspection, Inspiration, Speaking Your Truth, Liberation from Inhibitions, Harvest
G	Transpluto, Moon, Asteroids	Sept. 30–Oct. 27 7° Libra–4° Scorpio	Determination, Restriction/Release, Craftsmanship, Inner Transformation
NG	Pluto, Moon	Oct. 28–Nov. 24 5° Scorpio–2° Sagittarius	Harmony, Protection, Adaptation, Union of Opposites, Cleansing, Astral Travel
STR, SS, or Z	Saturn, Pluto, Chiron	Samhain or 15° Scorpio	Control, Wounding, Destruction, Strife, Perseverence, Surrender
R	Saturn, Venus	Nov. 25–Dec. 22 3° Sagittarius– 1° Capricorn	Change, Transition, Flow, Fate, Shame, Retribution, Blessings, Regeneration
A	Mars, Sun	Winter Solstice 0° Capricorn	Good Health, Purification, Strength, Joy, Objectivity, Perspective, Elation
O	Sun, Mercury	Spring Equinox 0° Aries	Synthesis, Sexuality, Gathering, Wisdom after Work, Opportunities, Faith
U	Mars, Venus, Sun	Summer Solstice 0° Cancer	Passion, Romance, Dreams, Gateway, Imagination, Being Open to Possibility
E	Pluto, Saturn, Jupiter	Autumn Equinox 0° Virgo	Overcoming Resistance and Fear, Gain, Endurance, Protection, Intuition, Listening
I	Saturn	Winter Solstice 0° Capricorn	Death, Ending, Transformation, Change, Immortality, Spirituality, Ancestors, Roots

Figure 7: *Ogham Alphabet, continued* (see note below)*

Note: There are some discrepancies among modern practitioners in the order, symbol, and calendar/zodiac correspondences. The drawing order of the ogham often does not match the monthly correspondences. Various systems rearrange and omit certain ogham characters. Some months are

associated with more than one ogham character. Listed here are some of the most commonly used correspondences. Realize that although the ogham is an ancient symbol system, many of our modern magickal uses are just that—modern. Notice the wide variation in planetary correspondences. There is room for personal correspondences and interpretation. As long as it works for you, then it is right for you.

Norse	Yggdrasil
Greek	Mount Olympus
Sumerian	Huluppu, Khuluppu
Persian	Gao-kerena
Mongolian	Turge (Tree), Humber Uuala (Mountain)
Hindu	Mount Meru, Asvattha Tree
Mayan	Yaxche

Note: When correlating similar names and concepts for the spirit realms in this and future charts found in this book, it is important to understand that these terms are the ones that are more easily recognized as equivalent from our modern Western view. Each term has its own cultural context and significance, and is not necessarily the exact equivalent of the other terms in the cultures being compared here. Many cultures span a large time frame, geographical area, and set of languages, giving room for many variations. If you desire to pursue a single cultural tradition, use these terms as a starting point for further study into its specific intricacies.

Figure 8: *Names of the World Tree/World Mountain*

Study of the ogham can help with your understanding of the power of trees, and the World Tree as it manifests to you. Working with the ogham characters in magickal charms, divination, or meditation can help unlock the inner mysteries of Celtic shamanism.

The Celtic tree I prefer as the World Tree is the oak. The Celtic word for oak is *duir,* and many think the priestly caste known as the Druids took their name from the oak. Oak is seen as a powerful tree of life and death, connecting the realms and being sacred to the gods. Other powerful trees in the Celtic tradition are the ash, hawthorn, and blackthorn. Oak, ash, and thorn are popular ingredients in herbal magick. I am also partial to the willow, birch, pine, and rowan trees.

Not all cultures focused on a tree. Some looked at the cosmic axis as a mountain. The mythology of Mount Olympus, home of the Greek gods, is an example of the shamanic spire. One climbed the mountains to reach the home of the gods, or traveled in the tunnels of the earth to reach the lower worlds. Trees, mountains, hills, and ladders all are images of the cosmic axis the shaman learns to climb.

Other axis mundi images are stairs, a cross reaching to the heavens, or a great spider web sacred to the weaver goddess of creation. The world river, connecting all lands material and spiritual, is another popular shamanic image. Many shamans imagine riding a canoe to the other worlds. The river is equated with the Milky Way. In Mongolia, the world river is called the Dolbor. Modern urban shamans can use the image of a skyscraper as their world spire. Other axis images include vines, ropes, or paths made of moonlight or starlight. The light of the North Star is frequently called North Star Road, guiding shamans to other worlds. I even think of the giant beanstalk from the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk* as a type of cosmic axis.

A specific tree or mountain was designated sacred to a community and was referred to as the World Tree. It later baffled anthropologists who would find both myths and living tribal people that all designated the tree, forest, or hill near their settlement as the center of the universe. If a tribe moved or split off from another, they seemed to take the center of the world with them. When these scientists thought about it literally, it made no sense, but shamanism is not literal. It is a symbolic, poetic, and magickal truth. Shamanic cultures understood that the center of the universe is a state of being. When you take notice of where you are and your relationship to all things, you stand in the center of the universe. All points are the center, and the shaman can access the World Tree from any location because it is everywhere. We each experience our own seemingly separate reality because we each have a different point of view. We are each our own center of the world.

Exercise 5

Finding Your World Tree

Tribes would designate a sacred spot or tree as their center of the universe for many reasons. On one level it is symbolic. On another it is practical. Having a common, real-world vision of a specific tree gives you a focus for your visualization and shamanic journeys. On the deepest level it is spiritual. The living land gives you an energetic connection to the cycles of life. Communing with the natural world gives you a portal into other states of consciousness. By building a relationship with a specific site, you deepen your connection to all of nature and all worlds.

Travel to a location near you, and find a tree with which to make a connection. Ideally you want a tree you can visit regularly and make a physical link to. Don't pick a location that is far away or inaccessible to you. Once you make the link, you can travel and still be connected to the tree. My World Tree is the red oak tree in the backyard of my parents' first home, where I learned magick. Although I no longer live there and the house has been sold, I am still connected to the tree.

As you explore nature, be it the woods, your backyard, or a public park, put out the intention to find your World Tree. Follow your intuition. World Tree images are usually tall and strong and seem to have lots of nooks and crannies in the root system, like miniature caves and tunnels. When you find one that seems special to you, sit down with it and enter a meditative state (Exercise 1). Ask the spirit of the tree if it is the right tree for you. If so, continue to meditate with the tree for a bit. Observe it carefully. Look at its bark, leaves, branches, and roots. Take a picture of it. Determine what kind of tree it is. If you can't, take a field guide with you the next time you visit, to make a positive ID. Then research the magickal properties, personalities, and myths of that type of tree. Look in tree magick, ogham, and even traditional mythology books. It doesn't have to be ash, yew, or oak. It can be anything. Your tree will be right for you. If you can't find any magickal information on your tree, go back to the tree and meditate with it again. Ask the tree spirit directly for more knowledge of its magickal properties. Then listen. You may be surprised by what you suddenly hear, see, feel, or know. Record your research and intuitions in your Book of Shadows.

Visit the tree to deepen your connection to it. If possible, you can do some of the future exercises from this book right by the tree. If that's not possible or it is unsafe to do so, you can simply make an energetic connection to the tree and do the exercises in the privacy and safety of your home. Through your will and imagination, you can always connect to the World Tree.

Although I love and prefer the image of the World Tree, if you find another image that is more suitable for your journeys, such as a mountain, web, or ladder, find ways to research and connect with that image.

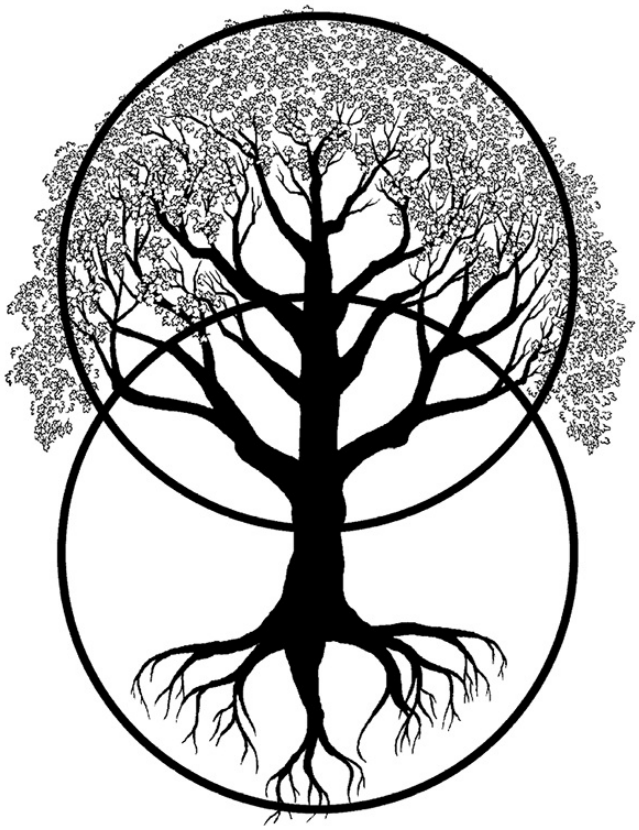


Figure 9: *Shamanic World Tree and the Vesica Pisces*

The Three Worlds

The cosmic axis, the great World Tree, divides the spirit worlds. Our first natural division is the veil, the separation between the physical and the nonphysical. The spiritual cosmos is made up of more than two worlds. In the most basic shamanic cosmology, three distinct zones of activity are identified. Though traditions give them different names, they are usually designated by location: the Middle World, Upper World, and Lower World. The scholar Ovid named the three worlds Gaea, Eros, and Chaos.

The Middle World is the one with which people are most familiar. The Middle World is the realm between the two extremes, where our human world resides. The Middle World is the realm of the physical universe—width, height, and depth, as well as time. The Middle World is the space-time continuum and contains all places and all times. A mystic who knows how to move in the Middle World can go anywhere at any time. If you have experienced psychic travel (*ITOW,* exercise 26), past-life regression (*ITOW*, exercise 34), or divination (*OTOW*, exercise 29), you have worked with the Middle World

energies.

Those in traditional society, outside the witch's worldview, only look at the physical world. If you can't see, hear, or otherwise measure something, it's not real. Fortunately modern people are accepting the concept of other nonphysical realities through the research of modern scientists involved in quantum physics. In the magickal theory sections of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* (chapter 7), we explored the concept of the *vesica pisces,* the fishlike sacred geometry form created from two overlapping circles to demonstrate the hologram, two energy fields creating a new construct (Figure 9). Perhaps our simple holographic model of the universe is actually the forces of the Upper World and Lower World overlapping to create our Middle World, the physical universe, the solid hologram of our reality.

The Upper World is the heavenly realm above our physical reality. Also known as the Overworld, it is the realm of awareness and enlightenment. It is the realm of white light commonly described by those who have had a spiritually transforming near-death experience. Imagine looking at the world from above. There is great beauty in seeing the big picture. Think of how awe-inspiring our first view of the earth from space was and still is. If you've ever traveled in a plane and looked out the window, think about how the earth looks below. The view is beautiful, and you can see things, patterns in the big picture, that you could never view from the earth level, yet it all seems distant. The energy of the Upper World feels distant or detached. The realm is one of enlightenment, unconditional love, and divine revelation. It is visualized as a heavenly paradise where everyone and everything is peaceful and unchanging in their cities of light. The sky gods rule the realms above, and many describe it as a very masculine, intellectual, and impersonal realm. These qualities are not good or bad, they simply are a needed part of the balance. One comes to the upper realm for information, perspective, and detachment.

The Lower World, or Underworld, is the realm below, and encompasses the realm of the dead. This is the world of the ancestors and is not to be confused with the Christian concept of hell. The ancestors live peacefully until it is their time to move from that realm to another. Territories in the Underworld also include those of the Underworld gods, the faery folk, and the deep chthonic powers of creation. Visualized as a primordial realm, an underground forest or a jungle of great age and power, it is like a land before time. There is light in

the Lower World, though its source is not always clear, emanating from the land itself. The energy is characterized as more feminine and emotional, embodying both the nurturing and destroying aspects of the Goddess. The Underworld can be a scary place because it acts as a mirror, reflecting whatever we bring to it. For this reason, it can be simultaneously a place of healing and rest and a place of challenges. Journeys to the Underworld are accompanied by the sound of the ocean tides, yet the oceans are not visible, or by the humming buzz of hive insects, such as bees. Like the realm of dreams, messages from the Underworld must be pondered and deciphered, while messages from the Upper World are more direct. The Underworld is a place of challenge and testing, where shamans must unravel a riddle or prove their power to claim wisdom and energy. Shamans descend to the Underworld to receive healing energy and to find allies in the primal powers.

These three zones of activity can be further subdivided, and many traditions do so. The Norse have a system of nine worlds. The Aztecs have thirteen “heavens” and nine “hells.” The various Celtic myths divide the lands into different territories, where it can be difficult to tell if the world is upper or lower. The three Celtic realms in this cosmology were known as Annwn, Abred, and Gwynvyd. Annwn is the Lower World in Welsh mythology. Abred, also know by some as Ddaer, is the Middle World. Gwynvyd is the heavenly world, which is said to contain many other realms. The circle of Ceugant, the realm of pure divinity, surrounds them all. In the Celtic view, these other worlds, drawn as concentric rings, seem to exist parallel with our ordinary reality, Abred, and you can only tell if you’ve passed the veil between worlds by crossing a rather innocuous-looking marker, such as a hedge, clearing, or stream. Once you pass that marker, you face otherworldly beasts, and the normal rules of reality no longer apply, like Alice passing into Wonderland. In fact, in medieval lore, witches were called hedge jumpers or hedge witches, noting both their knowledge of the green world and their ability to jump the “hedge,” or veil, between worlds and enter the spirit realm that stands side by side with the one everyone else sees.

The hedge is not only a metaphor for the veil, but also the literal boundary between civilization and the wilderness of spirits. The Stone Age hunter-gatherers of the forest lived as one within the forest. When they learned to

clear the land to make settlements, that relationship changed. The area then encouraged the growth of natural hedge walls, consisting of many thorn undergrowth plants associated with witchcraft, such as the hazel, elder, wild rose, sloe, hawthorn, buckthorn, blackberry, barberry, and gooseberry. There the wise ones learned their herbal craft, speaking to plant spirits. They walked the hedge between civilization and the wild world of spirits. Society eventually became separated from the wilderness, no longer finding solace there, but seeing it as place of wild otherworldly things. The wise ones remembered the power of the forest, and there at the edge, in the space between, they became hedge witches.

The Celtic ogham are associated with the three worlds of Celtic cosmology, which is similar to shamanic cosmologies across the globe. The figure known as Fionn's Window, referring to Fionn mac Cumhail, found in *The Book of Ballymote,* hints at these shamanic associations (Figure 10). In Edred Thorsson's *The Book of Ogham,* the ogham are associated with the three worlds (Figure 11). Each world is divided into land, and each of the ogham can be associated with a land or a path between worlds. The single-slash characters are the Underworld, while the double strokes are the paths leading to the Underworld. The triple-stroked ogham are in the Middle World, the quadruple-stroked figures are the paths to the Upper World, and the quintuple-stroked oghams are in the Upper World. The central axis, the great tree, is the only path without ogham associations. The paths and associations are very similar to the classical Qabalistic Tree of Life glyph, which consists of ten worlds and twenty-two paths associated with tarot cards and Hebrew letters.

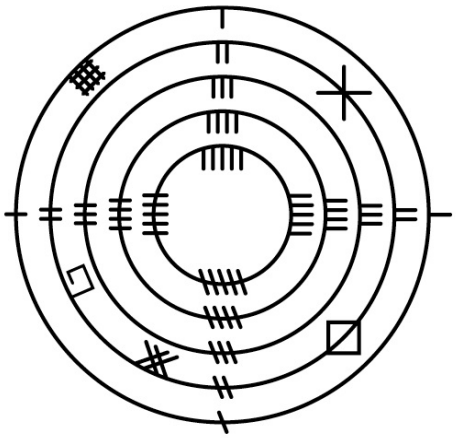


Figure 10: *Fionn's Window*

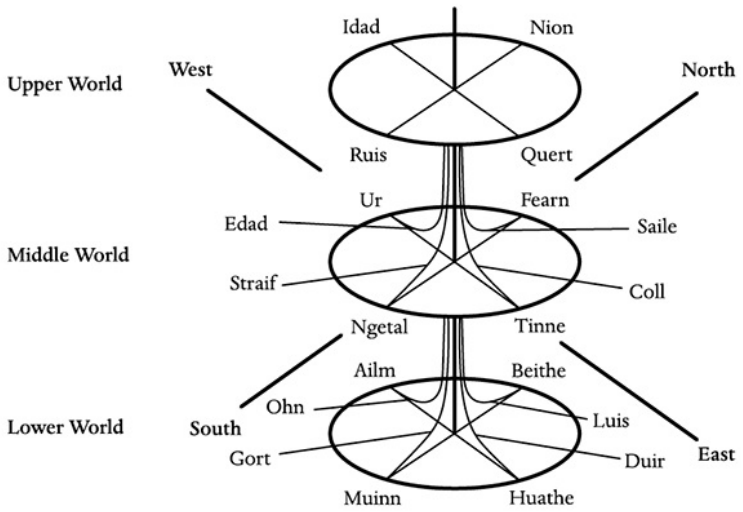
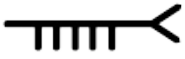
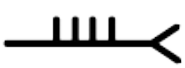
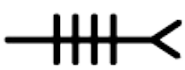


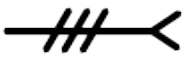
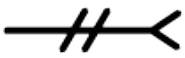
Figure 11: *Ogham and the Other Worlds Diagram*

These ogham associations reflect one view of Celtic reality. By meditating on figures 10 and 11 or the associated ogham, you can receive insights that will aid your journey. Modern practitioners are reconstructing this system of tree associations with the various worlds and paths. We don't have knowledge of the original system, assuming this was an ancient shamanic system, so the opinions of various practitioners on corresponding ogham are often conflicting.

For more information on the ogham alphabet and its associations with the shamanic Tree of Life, look to *The Book of Ogham* by Edred Thorsson and *Green Witchcraft III* by Ann Moura. Though there are differences in interpretation, you can use this information as a springboard for your own associations.

Upper World		*Symbol*	*Ogham*	*Tree*	*Letter*
	North		Nion/Nuin/Nin	Ash	N
	East		Quert	Apple	Q
	South		Ruis	Elder	R
	West		Idad/Ioho	Yew	I
Paths	1		Saile	Willow	S
	2		Coll	Hazel	C

	3		Straif	Blackthorn	STR, SS, or Z
	4		Edad/Eadha	Aspen or White Poplar	E

Middle World		*Symbol*	*Ogham*	*Tree*	*Letter*
	North		Fearn	Alder	F
	East		Tinne	Holly	T
	South		Ngetal	Reed or Broom	NG
	West		Ur	Heather	U
Paths	1		Luis	Rowan	L
	2		Duir	Oak	D
	3		Gort	Ivy	G
	4		Ohn	Gorse or Ferze	O

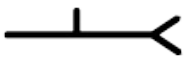
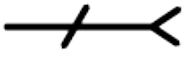
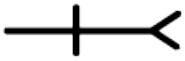
Lower World		*Symbol*	*Ogham*	*Tree*	*Letter*
	North		Beithe	Birch	B
	East		Huathe	Hawthorn/ Whitethorn	H
	South		Muinn	Vine	M
	West		Ailm	Fir or Pine	A

Figure 12: *Ogham and the Other Worlds Chart*

Balancing the Worlds

When you face spirits, power beings, or gods in the three worlds, one is not necessarily superior to the others based on location. Sky gods are not superior to Underworld gods, and so on. The categories are simply based on energy. Similar energies gather together and influence their function, but all are

needed.

As shamanic traditions changed, particularly with the rise of Christianity, the image of a complete cosmic axis diminished. Traditions that focused exclusively on the Upper World used imagery of mountains, hills, and ladders that only go up. Staircases from heaven are a great example, but in our modern age, it could be the heavenly elevator. The Upper World traditions are more ascetic and seek a path of enlightenment, detachment, and impersonal bliss. These paths denounced the blessings of the Underworld, and some even looked at them as temptations. We see these popular misconceptions reflected in the Christian worldview of one realm of absolute good and another of absolute evil. In some forms of Christian and even pre-Christian mysticism rose the idea that the physical world was a prison, and true spirituality seeks to escape it. Most shamanic and pagan traditions look at the physical world, at nature, as an embodiment of the divine, even though we recognize it as only one aspect of being. Certain Native American traditions view the Underworld as a place to be avoided, of evil spirits and corruption, though most recognize the balance between the three worlds.

Underworld traditions focus solely on the lower point of the axis. As the Underworld spirits deal more with fertility of land, animals, and people, as well as physical healing, prophecy, herbcraft, and creating change in the world, communities who were focused more on survival and simple enjoyments focused on the Underworld. The great tree and mountain became the hill, cave, and fairy mound. Some use pools of water, bogs, wells, and the ocean itself as the Underworld portal. These paths only lead below to the depths. The paths above to the heavens became a place of judgment. In lands where Christianity grew strong, such as the Celtic territories, the shamanic traditions left the heavens to the Church and claimed the Underworld as their own. Such divisions played a strong role in the persecution of the old religions of nature reverence and faery rituals. As we reclaim traditions of shamanism for modern pagan practice, I think it is pivotal that we honor equally the upper, lower, and middle realms. Each is a necessary part of the whole, and part of our whole self.

The three worlds are really circular, even though we have mapped them out in linear fashion. We think of top, middle, and bottom, but in truth there is one

circle of life. The branches of a tree bear fruit, nuts, or seeds, which in turn become the roots of other trees, thus completing the circle. When you look up into the night sky, you see the stars, and around them you see the darkness, like the darkness of the Underworld. When you meditate on the realms below, you may be surprised to find that at the center is a great source of light, a great star within the earth and Underworld, a star heart that illuminates and radiates energy more subtly than the stars in the sky, but not less powerfully.

The highest heavens can lead to the depths of the Underworld, and the center of the Underworld can lead to the realm of stars. As above, so below. Everything is connected.

Shamanic Psychology

Our consciousness parallels the spirit worlds. As we map one, we map the other. Through their work, shamans have come to create a rather complex teaching of soul psychology. Again, we live in a society that focuses solely on dualism. As we think of the veil, and think there is the physical world and a nonphysical world, most people focus on the fact that they have a body, and acknowledge perhaps that they have a soul. Their attention goes to the world in which they spend the most time.

Shamans believe in multiple realities, so each person reflects those multiple realities. We have multiple bodies for these multiple realities. Though many systems continue to divide and subdivide the spiritual bodies, as in Celtic and Norse models, I think it's best to start with the simple model of three worlds, three selves: the middle, higher, and lower selves.

Middle Self

The middle self corresponds to the Middle World. This is your physical self, but it is much more than just your body. The middle self is your Middle World identity. It is your personality and your ego. It is all your past memories and all your potential future choices. It includes the energy template of the physical body, the etheric body. The middle self is your worldly identity in this place and time. Many mystics think their job is to destroy the ego, but such teachings are only symbolic. A better way to put it is that you must transcend the ego, not be trapped by it, and learn that you have a higher self. You are not the ego, but you need your ego to interact with people in the Middle World.

Higher Self

The higher self is your divine, immortal self. Some think of it as your soul or spirit. Ceremonial magicians characterize it as your Holy Guardian Angel, or HGA for short. It is not a protective spirit in the way most people conceive of a guardian angel, but your own angelic or divine essence. It is the most godlike of your selves. The higher self is beyond space and time, and can see the patterns of this life and all of your lives as a whole. This self is truly wise and loving, the part of you that is most in touch with the divine mind. Your true magickal will, your life's purpose, comes from the higher self. By coming into union with the higher self, your magickal and psychic abilities naturally and safely grow. You will simply be in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing.

Lower Self

The lower self is the intuitive, gut-level wisdom we all hold. Some think of it as your body's wisdom. Others think of it as your subconscious self. When you feel something in your body, perhaps about whom to trust or not to trust, or when you get a sudden flash of insight, that is your lower self speaking. The lower self is linked with intuition, psychic abilities, and magick. It is seen as animalistic because it relies on instinct rather than logic. Because of these associations, many have erroneously assumed that the lower self is "evil" or tempts people into doing harm. In truth, it protects us from harm.

The relationship between the three selves is the pivotal factor in shamanic psychology. Without awareness and partnership on all levels, you feel incomplete or disconnected from the greater reality. The healing process puts you back in touch with these selves on a fully conscious level. With this balance, you move away from identifying solely with the middle-self reality, and see things from many levels of awareness. In part, this is what some in the New Age realm mean when they say "multidimensional." You are not literally disappearing physically into another dimension. You become aware of the part of yourself—your other souls, higher and lower—that are already present in other dimensions. You tune in to the many "you's" for a multidimensional existence.

The more you consciously identify with all three selves, and shift your identity beyond just the middle self, the more you become awakened or enlightened in

this lifetime. Realizing your divine union and your divine individuality seems like a paradox. Living this paradox is the role of any witch, shaman, or mystic.

Beginning this process of connection is not encouraged in most of the modern world. The Western scientific world places great emphasis on the middle self and Middle World. Things not experienced and measured in the Middle World are considered impossible, illogical, or just plain crazy. Many acknowledge a divine guiding force and individual soul, but few know how to meaningfully build a relationship with this divine force. Few understand the purpose and benefits of doing so. Through faith they assume that the divine is present and guiding in a general sort of way, but they lack the spiritual tools to come into a direct relationship with that guiding force. When you learn to connect your three selves, you develop a direct relationship with this guiding force.

Communicating with Your Three Selves

Regardless of your level of magickal knowledge, you always have a relationship with your higher and lower selves. Just as you have a relationship with your parents, a genetic link, regardless of your current level of contact with them, you have a spiritual link with your other selves. Most people are like spiritual orphans, disconnected from true spiritual intimacy with their other selves.

One of the best explanations of the relationship between the selves was described to me through the tradition of Huna, a form of Hawaiian mysticism. Huna, in its New Age form popularized by author Max Freedom Long, is controversial because scholars of Hawaiian culture and practitioners of native Hawaiian religion will tell you the terms used in Huna are used incorrectly in a Hawaiian cultural context. Yet the system itself draws parallels to many other established shamanic traditions, and definitely works for its practitioners. The Huna terms are popular among neoshamanic and witchcraft traditions, particularly the Feri tradition. The teachings of Huna help us understand the statement “You create your own reality,” discussed in chapter 4, in relationship to our three selves, and give us strategies to change our current situation if the reality is not to our liking. Though a great simplification, this general teaching of Huna is very valuable to understanding our multidimensional, magickal

relationship.

In Hawaiian traditions, the three selves are known as the Uhane, Aumakua, and Unihipili. We live identifying with our middle self, or Uhane. We go through much of our life thinking we are our body, mind, and emotions. We are not aware of the lower self, the Unihipili, giving us messages. We are not aware of the higher self, Aumakua, looking at our path from above. We just know the Middle World. We unknowingly put out energy throughout the day. Magickal energy is in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We send that energy out into the world.

When we sleep, our middle self rests, but our lower self is free to do its work. Since we were not actively working with it during the day, it goes about at night, retracing our steps, and gathers up all the energy we have sent out in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Like a messenger, an intermediary spirit, the lower self brings this energy to our higher self. Tirelessly, the higher self uses this energy, like mud and straw to make bricks, to pave the path for our future.

The higher self wants to pave the best possible path for you, but it can only work with the elements you create for it. If you put out shoddy thoughts, words, and deeds, the higher self can only use what it has. Your path will be shoddy. If you increase the quality of your thoughts, words, and deeds, the higher self can improve your path. Part of improving our thoughts is relating to the shadow, the unconscious energy we are sending out into the world. We must become conscious of it if we are to change our path.

The higher self wants to talk to us, but doesn't know how since it seems too distant to us and we seem to never be looking up or listening. We might not understand a direct message or might start to think we are going crazy if the higher self attempted to communicate with us directly. So the lower self acts as a messenger. It brings back the wisdom of the higher self. We hear this wisdom as intuition, as gut feelings, and in symbolic dreams and visions. That is the only way it can get through. The more we practice listening, the more we build a conscious relationship with the lower self, and thereby the higher self.

Many mystics seek to avoid a relationship with the lower self, focusing on the higher self exclusively, but that is a mistake. The lower self does all the work, connecting the higher and middle selves. It is mercurial in nature, and the Mercurial archetypes of mythology are both messengers and magicians. The lower self holds a power, and manifests the wishes of the higher self and the

lower self. Being the Underworld aspect of the self, it is tempered by the primal powers of the Underworld, made strong and powerful. For a witch, the lower self is the key to aligning all three selves. We start our relationship with the lower self by developing our psychic ability and intuition, as outlined in *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.*

Psychic ability is the use of receptive information magick, where we learn to listen to the information given to us by the other selves. Spellcraft is the communication of our wants and needs to our lower and higher selves to re-create our reality. This is why wise witches perform spells to change themselves first, rather than trying to change other people or the environment around them first. The higher self has the greatest influence over the lower and middle selves. When you change yourself—your perceptions, feelings, and thoughts—your reality changes. Then the situation takes care of itself and there is no need to change another, or the circumstances of the situation. The shift, the true magick, occurs inside you.

The three selves are thought of as aspects of your soul, or three individual souls that all human beings have. These souls are personified or further subdivided.

In Mongolian shamanism, they have very specific ideas about the fate of each part of the soul, which accounts for a lot of the experiences many witches and mystics have reported. The ami, or Upper World soul, reincarnates into various lifetimes, but follows an ancestral link. The ami holds your genetic memories and stays within your tribe. With the blending of genetic cultures to such a great extent in the modern world, I don't know what that means for the ami, but in general, it is believed to follow bloodlines. The suns, or Lower World soul, is the part of you that reincarnates globally. Our past lives contain both a genetic path and a global path, accounting for a variety of reincarnation beliefs. The middle self, or suld, does not reincarnate. It returns to nature as a nature spirit in the Middle World. Well-developed middle selves may become guides, teachers, and guardians in the Middle World. So each lifetime is a unique blend of three selves.

Shamanic wisdom parallels the knowledge of ancient Greece. Plato's concept of the self was divided into three: the immortal logos, connected with the divine self, but identified in our modern era with the intellect; the thumos, or

will, living in the heart center; and the epithymia, the desire, residing in the belly.

The philosopher Empedocles believed we held two souls: the lower soul, or psyche, and the higher immortal soul, or daimon. The term daimon was corrupted when it was incorporated into our image of demons, but it originally stood for an intermediary spirit between mortals and the divine, much like an angel or spirit guide of our modern mystical terminology. In many ways, the higher self is both these things and more. To the ceremonial magician highly influenced by the ancient Greek mysteries, the higher self is only an intermediary step between the lower selves and the divine residing in the highest sphere of the Tree of Life.

Celtic traditionalists look to a tantalizing piece of lore about three cauldrons. Equated by some as Celtic teachings on energy centers much like the chakras, as the cauldron must be put "upright," drawing parallels to Taoist alchemical teaching, others see the three centers as teachings for the three souls. Coir Goriath deals with the heat and fire of the body, corresponding with the digestive system and nerves and helps us speak. Coir Ernmae, at the heart and solar plexus, is our center of inspiration, eloquence and our true will in this world. Lastly, Coire Sois is linked with the brain, and carries the knowledge, or laws of every art.

The three selves are also named in modern traditions of the craft. In the Feri tradition outlined by T. Thorn Coyle in *Evolutionary Witchcraft,* the higher, middle and lower selves are named Sacred Dove, Shining Body, and Sticky One. In this system, the bodies are given more physical locations. The Sticky One is akin to the etheric body, the Shining Body is linked to the energetic auric field, and the Sacred Dove intersects the other two at the crown chakra. The bird imagery can be found in many religions, from the dove of Christian traditions to the hawk and the Ba, the part of the soul appearing as a bird with the human head of Egyptian cosmology. The Faery tradition outlined by author Orion Foxwood calls the higher, middle, and lower selves the Star Walker, the Surface Walker, and the Dream Walker. Other less formalized witchcraft traditions call them the Star Self, the Earth Self, and the Animal Self. In *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft,* we called the three selves the divine mind, the conscious mind, and the psychic mind.

Following the Principle of Correspondence (*ITOW*, chapter 8), the shamanic

worldviews of each culture echo their anatomy of the soul. The various otherworldly territories refer to inner territories as well. Such correspondences are strongly evident in the Norse World Tree of nine worlds, Yggdrasil (Figure 13). Just as the Celtic World Tree is composed of three worlds subdivided, the Norse tree is also subdivided. Different diagrams and drawings relate the nine worlds slightly differently, but their general meanings and correspondences are clear.

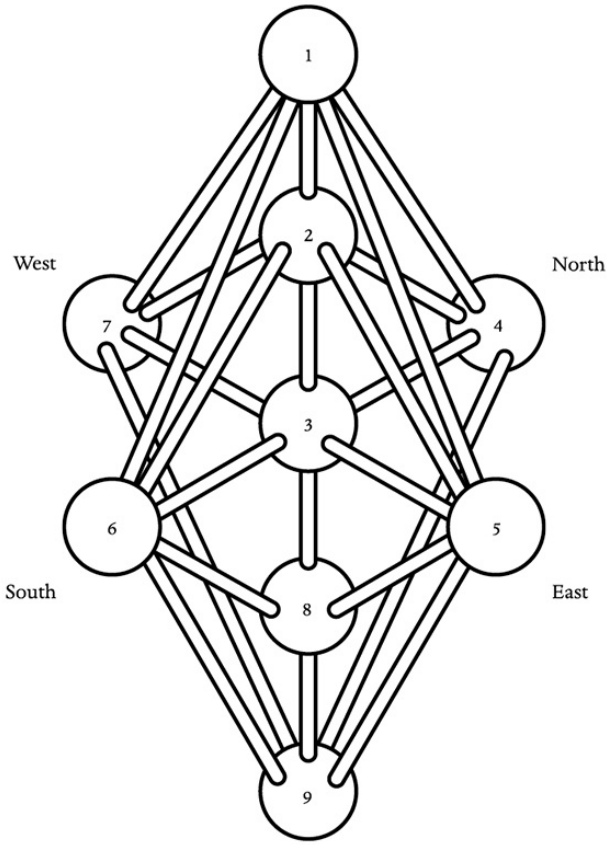


Figure 13: *Norse World Tree*

Upper Worlds

1. **Asgard**—Asgard, or Asgardhr, is the realm of the ruling gods, the Aesir. Gods such as Odin, Thor, and Balder belong to this tribe. In our soul cosmology, the first world represents our god consciousness, the higher self.
2. **Alfheim**—Alfheim is the realm of the light elves. Though not the Aesir, they are Upper World spirits of enlightenment and awareness. Some think of this realm as a world of the semidivine, of demigods and enlightened ancestor spirits who live with the elves. In our personal inner tree, Alfheim is our intellect and awareness.

Middle Worlds

3. **Midgard**—Midgard is the realm of mortals. Humanity is found in the center of the tree. Some gods are more concerned with the realm of mortals than others. In our inner anatomy, Midgard is the middle self and the body. Here we find our day-to-day consciousness.

4. **Niflheim**—Niflheim, also known as Niflheimr, is the realm of ice energy, one of the primal forces in the Norse cosmology. Ice is the power of stasis and solidity. Many would equate it with the earth elemental principle.

5. **Jotunheim**—Jotunheim is the realm of the giants. Mythically the giants are in battle with the gods. They represent the forces of motion and change within all things. This force could be equated with the air elemental principle.

6. **Muspellsheim**—Muspellsheim is the home of the other primal polarity—fire. Paired with ice, the two forces provide the dynamic motion of Norse myth and magick. Muspellsheim has obvious associations with the elemental qualities of fire.

7. **Vanaheim**—Here we find the realm of the Vanir, a tribe of gods more attuned to earthly concerns than to heavenly ones. In a war with the Aesir, the Vanir were defeated. As part of the truce, the tribes exchanged gods. The Vanir gave the Aesir custody of Freya and Frey, the two primal gods sometimes seen as embodiments of the Lady and Lord. The realm of Vanaheim is one of natural balance. Vanaheim is sometimes connected with the forces of elemental water by modern pagan practitioners.

Underworlds

8. **Svartalfheim**—Svartalfheim is the mirror image of Alfheim, being home to the dark elves, the dwarves, and the spirits of nature that dwell below. They are considered mischievous and sometimes even malicious. Svartalfheim, in our inner world, is the realm of emotion.

9. **Hel**—The lowest of the worlds, Hel is the realm of the Underworld, the realm of the dead ruled by the goddess Hel. Despite Christian associations with the name, and a different spelling, Hel is simply the realm of the dead, not of punishment or torture. Since so many of our myths of Christian hell are of fire or ice, perhaps Christian missionaries joined Hel with Muspellsheim and Niflheim when seeking to convert the Teutonic tribes to the new religion. In

our inner tree, Hel is the unconscious realm. When you become more aware of the lower energies of Svartalfheim and Hel, you are in contact with your lower self.

These are not the only places of interest in Yggdrasil. The World Tree is populated with many interesting beings, realms, and sacred sites. This particularly fascinating view of the Norse World Tree, with its obviously Qabalah-inspired diagram, can be studied in further detail in the book *The Nine Doors of Midgard* by Edred Thorsson. Although I personally find this image (Figure 13) most helpful, traditional myths of the Norse usually arrange the worlds with Asgard on the Upper level, Alfheim to the east, and Vanaheim to the west. Midgard is still the center of the Middle World, but accounts differ as to what worlds share space with it. This realm is often depicted with Svartalfheim to the south, Muspellsheim to the east, and Jotunheim to the west. In this arrangement, the Underworld consists of Hel and Niflheim.

Other cultures look at the subdivisions of the other worlds differently. Like the spectrum, it depends on where and how you want to draw the lines. Though you can study traditional material, I urge you to act like a pioneering shaman and create your own worldview. As you explore the World Tree, take note of the various landscapes in your journeys, and how they correspond to your inner selves. When you've had many years of experience, you might pioneer new insights into soul psychology and spiritual anatomy and contribute them to our global tribe's understanding of spirit.

The World Tree Within

If we think of the World Tree as aligned within us (Figure 14), and the three worlds of the tree as corresponding to the higher self, lower self, and middle self, then we have this pattern of reality expressed within our own consciousness. The chakra system, which runs along the spine (*ITOW,* chapter 11), is an obvious model for the World Tree. Here we have our inner cosmic axis, ending in the root chakra, but with energy trailing into our legs and down into the earth, like the roots of a tree. We have our crown chakra extending energy up to the heavens. The lower chakras focus on many of the Lower World issues, while the upper chakras focus on the Upper World issues. The heart chakra, the center of compassion, is the bridge between the upper and

lower realms, and it is here, in the Middle World, that we learn to live from our heart.

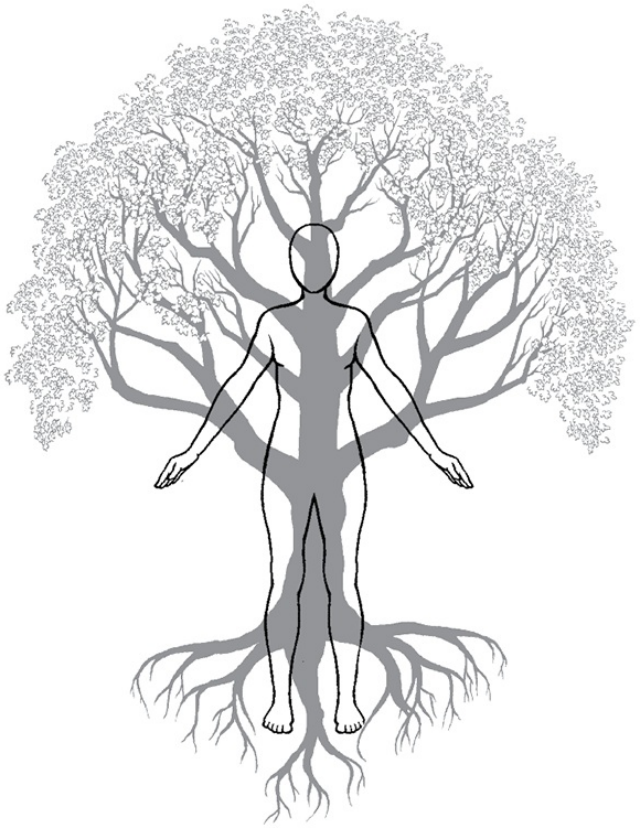


Figure 14: *Tree Breathing*

The central tube that connects the chakras is referred to as the pranic tube, since it moves life energy, or *prana,* through the chakras. It acts like the vascular system of a tree, bringing fluid up and down, but instead of sap, the pranic tube moves energy. This personal power is recognized by magickal and shamanic traditions across the globe. Hawaiians call it mana, the Mongolians call it tsog, and the Andeans refer to this basic life energy as kausay.

Even without extensive knowledge of the chakras, you can plant your inner World Tree and balance your relationship with the three selves existing in the three worlds. The following exercise, tree breathing, uses breath work through the inner World Tree. It is a powerful practice to do daily to open yourself to a greater awareness of the selves. It creates a harmonious relationship between all three selves.

Exercise 6

Tree Breathing

1. Start Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State to get into your magickal mindset.

2. Focus your attention on your heart. Bring all your awareness to your heart, and remember that it is the center of compassion and unconditional love, the witch's Perfect Love.

3. Imagine planting a seed in the fertile green light, the spiritual "soil" of your heart. Plant a seed of the same type as your World Tree.

4. Feel the water of your love nurture the seed. Feel the air of your mind coax it. Feel the light of your soul appear like sunlight and guide its growth. Feel the tree in your heart grow, with its trunk within your body, parallel to your spine.

5. Focus on the world below. Feel your inner tree's roots reach down through your legs and feet and into the earth, connecting you to the heart of the earth and into the Lower World. As you inhale, feel yourself drawing up the energy below into your roots and into your body. Feel the energy below you. Breathe steadily for a few minutes.

6. Now focus on the world above. Feel your inner tree's branches reach up through your crown and touch the stars in the heavens of the Upper World. As you inhale, feel yourself drawing down the energy of the sky realms into the branches. Feel it flow down into your crown and body. Feel the energy above you. Breathe steadily for a few minutes.

7. Alternate each breath, focusing on the world below for one full breath, and then the world above. Bring the energy into your body.

8. Simultaneously draw in energy from above and below with each breath. Breathe steadily for a few minutes.

9. As you breathe in the energy, will it to your heart chakra, and say to yourself the affirmation of "Perfect Love, Perfect Trust," infusing the energy with this intention. As you exhale, feel the qualified energy fill your body. As you continue to qualify the energy and exhale, feel it expand into your aura, the energy field around your body.

When you are done, you do not have to stop this exercise. Gently bring your

awareness back to the Middle World and your surroundings, but continue to breathe from above and below. Eventually your awareness of the tree and the energy flow will fade, but ideally you want to be connected to all three realms at all times. If you find the sensation to be too intense after you return, you can consciously ground yourself and will the process to stop.

If you have difficulty beginning this exercise, you can use ritualistic arm movements to initiate the flow. As you inhale from the earth below, raise your arms up. As you inhale from the sky above, bring your raised arms down. Movement can help with energy meditations such as this.

The more you use this tree breathing exercise, the more you will be connected to the upper and lower realms, and the upper and lower selves. This exercise will become much easier to do with regular practice. You will no longer have to “plant” the seed every time because the tree will already be there.

Shamanic Journey

Building your relationship with the other worlds is an ongoing process. We connect with our other selves and their energies, and we can project our awareness into the other worlds to fully immerse ourselves in the experience and partner with the beings there. This projecting of consciousness is called shamanic journey.

During a shamanic journey, you perform a ritual that helps you enter SSC (Shamanic State of Consciousness), or nonordinary reality. Through that shift in awareness, you will your consciousness to the center of the worlds, the cosmic axis, and use the axis to travel wherever you wish. You enter the cosmic hub, and from that point you launch your journey.

This is not a physical movement, but a projection of your spirit. Some think of it as the same as astral travel or remote viewing, but it’s more than your astral self or mental awareness. You can think of it as soul travel or psychic travel, because your consciousness relates to your higher and lower selves, beyond the mind and astral body. With soul travel, you are doing more than simply looking around. You have the opportunity to transform your entire being. This projected spirit form is frequently referred to as the double.

Unlike visualization, you have no explicit format for your journey. Visualization

helps us form a bridge between worlds, to move from ordinary to nonordinary reality, but somewhere along the way we cross a line where we stop using our magickal imagination and the journey itself takes over. Images, shapes, and beings appear to us that were not specifically visualized or intended. They appear spontaneously.

Each journey is different and will reveal new things. You start your journey with a short ritual. With an intention in mind and the help of a trance-inducing technique, usually music or drumming, focus your thoughts. Although it seems inhibitory, I usually focus my thoughts through a countdown. With a fast-paced drumbeat it's not inhibitory, but simply serves as a focus for my mind. It's like pulling back a rubber band to catapult my awareness forward. Then I will myself to go to the cosmic axis, the World Tree.

To go to the Upper World, I climb the tree and go into the branches. They guide me to the realm above. Native shamans would "fly" their spirit out of the smoke hole of a teepee to travel to the heavens, while medieval witches would escape through the chimney. Both used a fire before them as a part of their shamanic trance, so you could place a lit candle on your altar as a focus when you prepare to journey.

To go to the Lower World, I climb into the giant roots of the tree. The roots hide caves and tunnels that lead down to the realm below. Sometimes I climb the tree, and other times I feel like I merge with it. I think of the tree as having many tunnels inside it, and some go up and others down. Many shamans believe that the tunnels down go clockwise and the tunnels up go counterclockwise. Others seem random and sporadic.

Psychic travel through shamanic journey can be fast paced, like the drum. You may feel like you are running and being chased, because it is an exhibitory technique. Most images of tunnels are fast-paced, twisting spirals or roller coaster-like rides until you find light at the end of the tunnel or the mists part and reveal your new location. Let the experience inform you. Some journeys are very visual, while others are more sensory.

Some journeyers have a sense of a primal, vital self in the journey, running or dancing with the drum while at the same time being aware of their intellectual and detached awareness, as if they are looking at a part of themselves, analyzing their other self's experiences. Eventually the two perspectives can merge with time and training, so there is no separation between thought and

experience. Everybody, and every journey, is different.

Learning journeying techniques offers us many gifts. The first is the gift of being able to use shamanism to solve problems and partner with life. The difficulties of journeying can be great teachers and reveal more than any one specific journey could. If you are really attached to the idea of having a visual journey, and you don't, you have to face your expectations. If you feel it is a contest, or that this is something you have to perfect, you are missing the point. Like yoga, shamanic techniques are about honoring yourself, where you are at, regardless of other people's abilities. If you surrender to the experience, you will have the experience that is perfect for you. Learning to journey will teach you lessons about your ego and expectations like few other things ever will. Pay attention to the actual experience, not what you want it to be, and honor the difficult lessons that you learn as you train yourself in the art of shamanic journey.

Themes in Journeying

Some common cross-cultural images occur in shamanic journey, even when the practitioner has no background in any mystical tradition. These images are considered archetypes, and they cross the bounds of land and time. Though most psychologists would probably sterilize them by thinking of them as just simple concepts, to the witch and shaman they are living energies, living beings with whom we partner.

One benefit of our ancient cultures was that any potential practitioners were already educated in the symbols, myths, and archetypes of their culture. Tribe members had an understanding of the worlds, gods, and totems. Through knowing myths, the practitioner understood the potential situations and their spiritual significance. Unfortunately, we typically lack that intimate knowledge today.

We have experience of archetypal energies through our popular culture, books and movies, but we do not understand their sacredness. In the context of this book I could never cover all the themes of world mythology. That would fill many volumes in itself. My best suggestion is simply to study more mythology. Myth is the common language used in nonordinary reality.

In my teaching practice, I have a few students who feel that studying

mythology would be like “poisoning the well” of their mind. If they read a myth about a thunder god, say the Norse god Thor, and then they “see” Thor in a shamanic journey, they would feel that reading his story had subconsciously influenced their experience and that they did not have an authentic experience with the energy of Thor. They would feel that they had made it up in their mind. To have an authentic experience, they believe they must have no past knowledge of Thor, and expect a fierce-looking Norseman holding a hammer to come up to them and introduce himself as Thor, the thunder god.

I have also had a few students who came to witchcraft and shamanism with no past background in mythology and magick, who did meet various gods and heroes, described them in a manner that fits their myths, and even had their names. I had one student who put on a drumming CD, closed his eyes, and met up with someone “who had horns, like a reindeer, called himself something like ‘Herne,’ and blocked the way, telling me to go back and I’m not ready yet.” This does happen, but rarely, and it takes someone who is very open and clear in receiving the message. Not everybody has these experiences, and not everybody needs to in order to practice shamanic witchcraft.

Most authentic tribal shamans were raised with the stories of their gods and power beings. Most do not have a “clean slate.” The gods are vast energies, and by knowing their names and stories, we create touchstones to connect with them in nonordinary reality. Learning mythology is a matter of respect and energetic bonding. The myths act as maps to get to the energy of the gods. The myths help us understand how to work with a particular god, and what will resonate with it and what will not. Magickal texts are filled with correspondences to the gods and spirits, particularly oils, incense, and colors. They were discovered by the cultures’ first shamanic practitioners, and are used as a tradition until a new practitioner builds a clear enough relationship to hear messages from the gods directly.

Having a clean slate can actually be a disadvantage. It’s like dream interpretation. If you seek to interpret a dream, and have no knowledge and understanding of symbolism, you will not get far. When you have an understanding of symbolism, and a large bank of cultural and personal symbols to use as a common language, you can interpret the dream. Shamanic journeys are referred to as waking dreams, and the symbols we have create a language, an interface to connecting with the pure energy of the other worlds.

The following are some basic themes in journeying.

Agreements

When visiting the spirit worlds, you might make agreements, contracts, or treaties with the spirits. They might agree to be your allies in exchange for your work in the material plane. You might make peace with a spirit who is causing difficulties for others in the Middle World.

Attunements

Attunements are opportunities for the shaman to experience and embody a particular energy. Attunements can occur with specific otherworldly places, or places in the Middle World, with certain times, colors, planets, deities, animals, plants, crystals, or anything else. Attunements are sometimes considered initiations into specific energies.

Battle

The sacred battle theme is quite common in shamanism, as many shamans are considered spiritual warriors. Like the Italian Benandanti, who fought the evil "witches" and the forces of illness and decay to protect their villages, shamans can fight the spirits of illness and danger. More often, they struggle with aspects of themselves and the collective consciousness of their community.

Counsel

Shamans typically go to the spirit worlds to seek the advice of more spiritually advanced beings who will have a different perspective on a situation. Shamans journey to seek counsel for themselves, others, and the tribe.

Enlightenment

Many journeys are taken to further the shaman's understanding of the divine and the universe. It becomes a spiritual quest to truly experience the realm of the gods.

Exploration

As shamans were the first mapmakers, your experience can be one of sheer exploration, getting the "lay of the land" of the other worlds.

Healing

The classic shamanic journey is one for healing energies.

Initiation

Shamans undergo empowerment rituals while in the spirit world. They are tested in the initiation—they are given a riddle to solve, or an obstacle or enemy to overcome. With success comes an increase in power, ability, or knowledge. Sometimes the initiations can be quite gruesome "rebuilding" experiences where the shaman is literally ripped apart and put back together by the gods.

Knowledge

Sometimes shamanic practitioners will find a teacher in the spirit world to further their education in a given field. Spirits will teach about any spiritual topic, and such lessons are not only consciously learned, but are spiritually encoded. Information is "downloaded" through vivid images, symbols, and sensations.

Quest

Your journey can include a search for a spiritual item or being. Achieving the goal is not always as important as what you learn on the quest. The story of the quest for the Holy Grail in Arthurian mythology is the archetypal sacred quest of modern paganism.

Trance Postures

The physical body and the subtle bodies are intricate systems of energy. By placing them in correct alignment, you create postures that are more conducive to spiritual work. Arts such as yoga and tai chi are intricate systems of spiritual posture. They give us specific poses to create change within us.

Shamans, too, use specific poses to create an inner change to nonordinary reality. Some are generally good for shamanic journey, while others are specific to a particular kind of journey, or to unlocking a specific kind of information. Images depicting these poses are found in ancient artwork.

Lying Down on Back

Normally I tell people not to meditate lying down because it's too easy to fall asleep if you're tired. For shamanic journey, I think that lying flat with your back to the ground is the best position of all, conducive to all types of journeys. Do not cross your legs or arms. Some prefer palms up, while others prefer palms

down. I've found that both work.

Celtic Sitting

This is the pose found with the horned god in the Gundestrup Cauldron, an ancient relic found in a peat bog in Gundestrup, Denmark, dating back to 100 BCE (Figure 15). Most believe the figure to be the god Cernunnos, while some think of it as a Celtic shaman in ceremonial outfit. The pose of this god or man is sitting on the ground, with legs drawn up. One foot is closer to the groin, with the toes of that foot slightly tucked under the thigh of the opposite leg. The pose is similar to the yogic half-lotus position. Arms are held upright. The figure is holding a torque (a Celtic neck ring) in one hand, and a horned serpent, or possibly an eel, in the other.

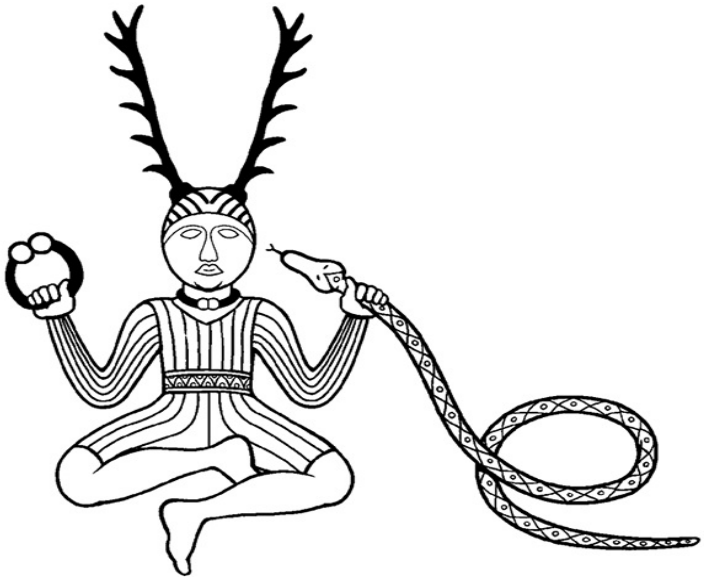


Figure 15: *Gundestrup Horned Figure*

Cross-Legged

For this position, you can sit similar to the Celtic sitting pose, but fold your legs over in a cross-legged position commonly referred to as Indian style. Many in yogic traditions rest their wrists on the knees and hold palms up in "gayan mudra," the hand position of wisdom formed by putting the thumb and first finger together.

Egyptian Sitting

Many modern practitioners favor sitting in a straight-backed chair, feet firmly on the ground and hands in the lap, as depicted in Egyptian temple art and statues (Figure 16).

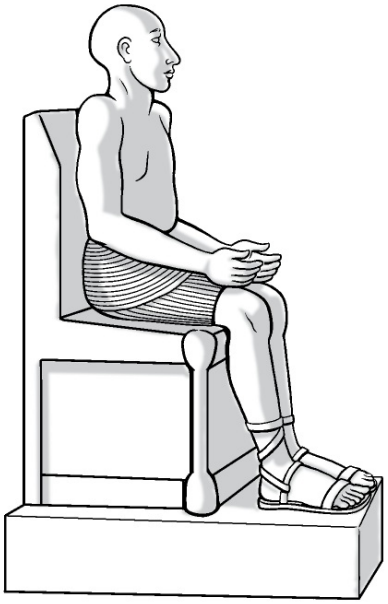


Figure 16: *Egyptian Sitting Pose*

Lying Down on Side

Some shamans lie on their side, feeling that the two different sides can influence their journey. I've been told that the left-side down facilitates Lower World journey, while the right-side down is for an Upper World journey. In some Voodoo initiations, an initiate is sequestered and encouraged to sleep on the left side to "dream." If you choose to lie on your side, make sure you do not bend the spine into the fetal position. Think of the spine as an antenna. When you curl it too much, it cannot pick up a signal. I had one student who favored this position and would curl up into a ball on the floor. At the end of the journey when the group would share their experiences, she would say nothing happened to her. When I suggested she lie on her back, and she finally did, her experiences became vivid.

Lying Facedown

If you desire to travel quickly to the Lower World, lying facedown is helpful since your position is projecting your awareness down already. Traditionally, based on records of a seventeenth-century German traveler (*Shamanism and Witchcraft,* Chas S. Clifton, ed., p. 24), the arms are outstretched with the right arm extended a bit further than the left. The head is turned to the right, and the ankles are crossed, right over left (Figure 17). If that seems too complicated, try just lying facedown .

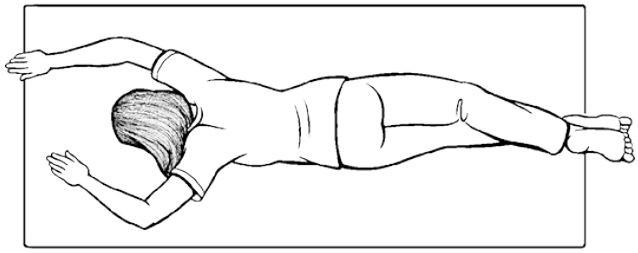


Figure 17: *Shaman Lying Facedown*

Standing

Though I personally find that this pose is not very conducive to journeying, a standing position is sometimes used for Middle World journeys. Try this traditional pose, from a statue from Malta (Clifton, p. 26). Stand with the legs slightly apart. Do not lock the knees. The right arm is down loosely by the side. The left arm is bent at the elbow, and the left hand is near the belly (Figure 18).

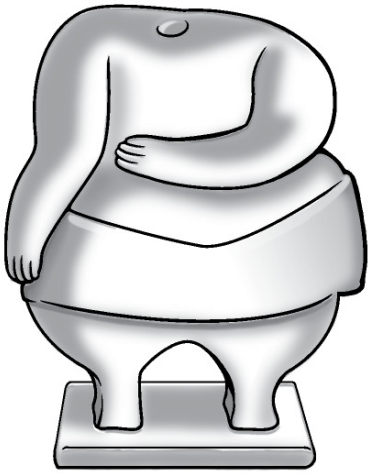


Figure 18: *Standing Statue Pose*

Lying on an Angle

For Upper World journeying, lying on an angle or incline, such as on a hill, can help you journey to the Upper World.

Squatting

Squatting positions can facilitate shapeshifting experiences (see chapter 7), among other types of journeys. Squat with feet flat on the floor, hands upon the knees, and legs apart for balance.

I almost always prefer lying down with my back against the floor for most of my journeys. Get whatever you need to be comfortable, including blankets, a

pillow, and a blindfold. Blindfolds or veils are used to block out unwanted light, to fully immerse yourself in the shamanic worlds. Eye pillows are a great tool both for comfort and blocking out light. I love to use an eye pillow filled with flaxseed and lavender to help me journey. You may have special items you use only for your journeys. Even if you do not cast a circle, you can still have an altar set up near where you will be journeying. I use a flat stone as the basis of my shamanic altar, and put small items for the four elements and my shamanic tools on top of it. You will learn more about shamanic ritual tools in the next lesson.

Exercise 7

Introductory Journey

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, you can cast the circle (chapter 3) and do the journey as the "work" of the ritual.

2. If you choose to use music to help you journey, and if you don't have someone to drum or rattle for you, play your shamanic music if it is not already on during your ritual. Assume whatever trance posture you feel is appropriate. I suggest lying down flat with your back to the ground. Wear your blindfold or veil, if you choose.

3. Start Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts. Count slowly, but in time with the drumbeats. If this is too distracting for you, you can skip the countdown and attempt to go directly into the journey.

4. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey. Say this or something similar:

 I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

5. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

6. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World Tree. Know the World Tree.

7. State your intention. The intention for this journey is simply to explore. Put your intention into the World Tree:

I start this journey to explore my connection to the other worlds. So mote it be.

8. Look for an opening in the roots of the World Tree. The opening will be like a cave tunnel. The tunnel may spiral upward or downward. Go with the motion and flow of it. Follow the tunnel into another world.

9. At the end of the tunnel, you see a light. Go out to the end of the tunnel, and look into the next world. Do not necessarily leave the tunnel. Just "stick your head out" and look around.

10. When done, return through the tunnel, back the way you came. Usually the break in the drum rhythm—the callback—will signal that it's time to return. Come back to the base of the World Tree. Thank the World Tree for this journey. Thank the gods and spirits for their help. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Count back up, and give yourself clearance and balance. Ground yourself as needed. If you cast a circle, release it. If not, you can create a "closing" ritual to bring completion. I just repeat the Shamanic Smudging Ritual.

This is the basic structure of any shamanic journey. Learn the components so you can eventually journey on your own for intentions beyond the exercises in this course.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 5–7 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.
- Keep a traditional journal as part of your magickal work. Record both your magickal experiences and those in your day-to-day life. Watch for the effects of your magick in your daily life. It can be a part of your Book of

Shadows or completely separate, depending on your needs.

• Pick a cultural mythology and begin studying it. Shamanic witches tend to be partial to Celtic or Norse, but choose a culture that suits you. Study the gods, heroes, and creatures of that mythology. You will continue to study this mythology for the coming year. If you have already studied a mythology in detail, expand your horizons and pick another that you feel will be suitable to your shamanic work. Compare how the myths you are familiar with are similar to or different from your new studies.

• Try the Second Attention exercises outlined at the end of chapter 2.

Tips

• If the image of the tree or any other axis-mundi image does not work well for you, start your journeys at your inner temple, and open the gateway of journey (*ITOW,* chapter 14).

• When doing a journey, invite the experience to happen, and allow it to naturally unfold. Let your imagination, intention, and visualization be a bridge, but then let the journey take flight on its own. Don't try to force it or control it. The images might be unexpected. Go with it.

• Be respectful of any being you meet on your shamanic journeys. Think of yourself as a visitor to these lands, and unless given reason otherwise, treat any being as you would a respected elder. You don't necessarily have to agree with or do what the being says, but act with respect.

• For now, do not take anything back with you from the other worlds unless specifically told to do so by a being of power whom you trust.

• For now, do not try to create anything new in the other worlds.

• For now, try to return to the Middle World and the base of the tree by the same path you went into the other worlds. Only return by a different route when you are strongly guided to do so. Don't just open your eyes when you think you are done. If you opened the space and started a ritual, have respect and close the space and end the journey. Such practice will have long-term benefits for you to help you handle difficult journeys.

• You can use the recordings on *The Temple of Shamanic Witchcraft Meditation CD Companion* to guide you through the shamanic smudging

ritual, countdown, journey, and callback. As you develop as a practitioner, you can perform the ritual and countdown on your own, and only play the journey and callback. If you find you need a longer time to journey, press repeat on your player for the journey track only so you can trance as long as you desire. You will be able to guide yourself back when you are done.

[contents]

6

Lesson Two
The World Aside

In the three worlds of the shaman, new explorers usually forget to venture into the pathways of the middle realm. Potential walkers-between-worlds are so fascinated with the Lower and Upper Worlds, because of their primal power, that they forget that the sideways paths of the Middle World lie all around them.

The Middle World is the physical universe we all know, including all of space and time. In the Middle World things are born. They grow. They die and then return to their source, perhaps to be born again. The Middle World is the only world known by those who ignore magickal realities. We all experience the objective world around us, although our view of it is fairly subjective and personal. We all experience memories of our past and yearning for our future. These are Middle World experiences.

On the purely physical plane, the same laws of objective reality—principles like gravity, momentum, and force—rule us all. Because of this, most new shamanic practitioners don't see the magick in the Middle World.

We are also ruled by seemingly subjective rules of reality—karma, polarity, and correspondence. We are ruled by these metaphysical laws because our physical world is supported by an energetic reality. The subtle energy beyond the obvious physical world is also a part of the Middle World. When we stand at the trunk of the World Tree, where the worlds meet, the Upper and Lower Worlds overlap in the Middle World. No wonder the traditional witch casts the magick circle in the Middle World, yet moves beyond the veil, between the worlds. Acts in the Middle World can create changes in all three worlds. The Middle World is a special place. Here the powers converge. Here we can go anywhere and do anything.

The Sideways Paths

During the Burning Times, the inquisitors recorded tales of witches flying through the night sky through the use of their magickal potions, converging to celebrate satanic masses. Though taken literally at the witch trials, these accounts are actually the remnants of a European shamanic tradition using herbal “flying” ointments to induce trance. While visiting this shamanic otherworld, they would celebrate the seasons and turn the Wheel of the Year, not worship the devil.

Visions of flying across the countryside match our modern descriptions of astral travel or remote viewing. Astral travelers describe the sensations like flying through the sky, visiting any place they desire. The flying witch differs from the astral traveler by stepping sideways through the Middle World, not only viewing the physical landscape, but meeting up with goddesses, gods, and all manner of spirits.

Witches walk the second road, the spirit paths of the land. The second road refers to the parallel paths one can travel in spirit, yet remain anchored to the physical. Some equate it with the astral plane. Those on the second road pass through the spirit veil, but do not travel below or above to another land. They walk the shadow of the Middle World. These second-road paths correspond with ley lines, earth energy lines, connecting sacred spaces and ancient temple sites. Faeries, dragons, and ghosts are also said to walk these lines, all beings associated with the witch. The rites of the Benandanti specifically used the astral space of the Middle World as a common battleground between the forces of health and fertility versus the powers of blight. In Celtic myth, mortals cross into an enchanted land that is neither up nor down, but sideways. The gateways to these side paths are at sacred sites, in groves, and across valleys, clearings, and streams. The energy of the Middle World is intimately tied to the land itself.

English	Earth
Celtic	Bith, Mide, Abred
Norse	Midgard
Andean	Kay Pacha

Figure 19: *Middle World Names*

The landscape of the Middle World on the subtle level, as opposed to its physical manifestation as the reality we all know, is not apparent unless you

know how to view the Middle World. The following are some general themes found in the Middle World that cross cultures and traditions.

Earth and Fertility Deities

The divine embodiments of the Middle World are the gods of the land. Pagans have usually viewed the planet earth itself as feminine, the Earth Mother or Mother Nature, like the Greek goddess Gaia. Some traditions look at the earth as male, or the changing vegetation and grain as the god force, with sacrificed grain gods and the archetypal Green Man. Other traditions see the grain as the Goddess, such as the Greek grain mother Demeter. Because both the land and the vegetation support all life on the planet, they are embodiments of the living Middle World in which we live.

Elemental Realms and Elemental Beings

The four elemental realms—earth, air, fire, and water—are part of the metaphysical reality that supports our physical world. They are pillars that support physical reality. They stand for the physical, mental, energetic, and emotional realms, respectively. Certain realms symbolically resonate with the energy of the other two shamanic worlds, such as fire and air with the Upper World and water and earth with the Lower World, but all four are mixed together to support the reality of the Middle World. On this plane of existence, they are our anchors.

Intelligences within the realms are called elementals, embodying their pure nature. Some mythologies, such as the Irish tales of the Tuatha de Danaan, describe the realms as four vast cities in the four directions. Many feel these sacred cities at the four corners of the world exist simultaneously in the three worlds—having a lower, middle, and higher aspect to each. Spiritually you visit these elemental realms when you want to learn more about the elements and their lessons. If you completed the exercises of chapters 7 and 8 in *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft,* you have already visited the elemental realms of the Middle World.

Inner and Outer Temples

Recently I did a series of Inner Temple workshops, and many people noted that their inner sacred space was inside the World Tree, not somewhere at the end of a tunnel. Although it might appear differently to everyone, I think of the

inner temple as our own personal part of the subtle Middle World, existing both within us and within the trunk of the World Tree. The outer temple, or your ritual circle, exists between the worlds but is anchored in the Middle World.

Land Guardians

The guardian spirits are entities linked intimately with the land, such as a mountain, forest, or river. Guardian spirits come in two forms. The first is *genius loci,* or spirit of a particular site. Many equate it with the god or angel of the land. Perhaps the various nature spirits of particular trees, plants, and stones at a location are like the cells of the genius loci's body. Others think of guardians as the spirits of spiritually developed humans who have passed on, and an aspect of their middle self remains in the Middle World to guard and nurture sacred places.

Shamans learn to ask permission of the guardian spirits of the land, saying a prayer, giving respect, and making an offering before entering a new site. Energetically you can feel the difference when you enter a forest without asking permission, and the change when you do. Paths become clearer. You don't "accidentally" walk into briars or poison ivy. The way seems to be revealed as if the land itself supports you rather than hinders you. Getting the permission of nature and guardian spirits is important if you plan on doing anything with the land, from magick to landscaping, or even a nature walk.

Messenger Deities

Most mythologies have messenger deities, travelers between worlds who act like shamans or mages. They are the archetype of the planet Mercury, and include the gods Hermes, Mercury, Thoth, Nabu, Odin, and Legba, and the wizardly figures of Merlin, Taliesin, Math, and Gwydion. Although each may have their different affinities, the mercurial gods really belong to none of the three shamanic worlds because they exist in all of them. They act as guides, teachers, and patrons to those of us in the Middle World who dare to walk between worlds.

Nature Spirits

All aspects of nature are manifested as spiritual entities. Plants, trees, and stones have a consciousness. Depending on the terminology of the tradition you study, some think of nature spirits as faeries and/or devas, but I personally

think of those terms as different otherworldly aspects of nature. The plants and stones themselves have a persona, much like the middle self of humans. This middle self is what I call the nature spirit, and can be called upon for healing, knowledge, and aid. Some think of the nature spirits as advanced elementals that have mastered all four elements and have now entered the fifth element—spirit—as a part of nature.

Sickness Spirits

The material world is made of things both helpful and harmful. If there is a spirit underlying a beautiful oak tree or lake, then there is also a spirit that supports illness, famine, and decay. Warrior traditions of shamanism, like the Benandanti, heal by personifying illness as the enemy that must be fought to create healing. Other shamanic traditions learn to partner with sickness spirits, and use their relationship with illness to create healing. Most sickness spirits extend back into the Underworld, into the unseen and unconscious. True dealings with the spirits of illness can be found there.

Spirits of Material Objects

Not only do all natural objects and phenomena have a spirit associated with them, but all handcrafted and humanmade materials also have an energetic spirit. Most shamans perceive natural objects as having the strongest spirit, but traditions of urban shamanism and techno-shamanism work with the spirits of fabricated objects. All reality is a manifestation of the divine, and manifests spirits big and small. Though not traditional, I feel that my car, television, and particularly my computer each have a spiritual force. Such entities might not be self-aware in the way many other spirits are, but it is still possible to partner with them.

Wild Hunt

The wild hunt is a European image belonging to many cultures. Generally, the hunt image is of a divine figure leading a pack of animals, hunters, faeries, and otherworldly spirits. The leader of the hunt is reported as Diana, Hecate, or Holda, when feminine, or the horned god, such as Cernunnos, when masculine. Later witch hunters said it was a pack of damned souls, ghosts, and witches led by Satan. Usually crossing into the Middle World during the waning half of the year, closest to Samhain, most pagans think of the hunt as protective

during the winter months, as the Underworld gods rule during the dark half of the year.

World Serpent

Serpentine energy is strongly connected to the Middle World and the earth, and has long been held sacred in the earth goddess traditions as a sign of wisdom. The waves of magnetic energy around the planet are sometimes described as a living, serpentine force. Water witches of the Fryske tradition see the male energy of the planet as serpentine or dragonlike, intimately connected to ley lines and waterways. Dragons are linked to the elemental power of the land, riding the earth lines, known as dragon lines in the East. Greek mythology has the Earth Mother giving birth to the dragon monster Typhon, a creature that plagues the Olympian gods. Jewish myth has the Leviathan. In the Norse, the Middle World is encircled by a serpent known as the Midgard Serpent, or Jormangund. Its image is reminiscent of the ouroboros, the serpent of alchemy traditions, devouring its own tail, showing the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The Middle World is the realm of life and change, shedding skin like a serpent to bring about something new. Like the snake, the Middle World can be both terrifying and rejuvenating.

Crafting Your Shamanic Tools

Working in the Middle World, the shamanic witch uses specific tools, just like the more mainstream traditional witches. Shamanic tools cross over quite easily with those of ritual magic. The main difference between your average Wiccan and traditional shaman is the view each holds regarding tools.

Traditional witches usually look at tools as a focus for their own energies and abilities. Some look at the tools as resonators with universal forces. A silver chalice will resonate with the energy of the Goddess and the moon because the chalice is receptive, like feminine energy, and silver is the metal ruled by the moon. Witches view tools as magickal batteries, carrying an intention as a “charge” when consecrated, and adding energy to ritual. Tools can act as gateways for specific energies.

Shamans look at ceremonial objects as allies or spirit helpers. Each tool is the embodiment of a spiritual ally. Some are naturally in the tool due to the materials from which it is made. Wooden tools will be connected to a tree spirit

ally. Herbs work with their corresponding plant spirit. If you burn sage, you're asking for the aid of the spirit of sage to help cleanse and bless this space. A crow feather aligns you with the spirit of Crow. Certain tools will be a vessel, a home, for a particular spirit, like its anchor or home in the material world.

The following are some shamanic witchcraft tools.

Blindfold

The blindfold is used to block out light, allowing you to focus on your inner vision. Witches can use the hood of a cloak or robe for the same effect, or you can drape a special blanket over you.

Ceremonial Costume

Shamans wear ritual garb, much like a traditional witch has a robe or cloak. Such costumes are elaborate shirts and robes that act as spiritual armor or protection when in other worlds. The outfits may have bells sewn on them to create a sound when the shaman dances, helping induce trance and ward off harmful spirits. Small mirrors are also sewn on, and used to deflect harm. Other accessories include masks, crowns, hats, fans, pouches, whips, and boots. Masks can be crafted in the image of specific deities or animal spirits to aid invocation and shapeshifting rituals. Hats, from the wide-rimmed hat of Odin to the faery cap, are another magickal accessory. A hat or headdress is worn to signify a shift in consciousness, to journey or access otherworldly sight. I think of the traditional wizard or witch hat, along with a host of more mainstream religious headgear, used to signify the office of a wise one. Modern shamanic witches can use traditional Wiccan ritual garb in place of shamanic costume.

Cleansing Items

These are tools that shamans use to clear a space, including smudge bundles, incense, floral water, or a bell.

Divination Tools

Shamans are proficient in divination. For witches, divination tools include tarot, though more shamanic tools are runes, ogham, or sets of divinatory stones or bones. You can also include scrying devices such as black mirrors and crystal balls. Just as a witch might use a divination tool before doing a spell, a shamanic witch might do a divination before attempting healing work (*OTOW,*

chapter 10).

Drum

The drum is the best-known shamanic instrument. The steady beat of the drum helps most practitioners achieve an altered state of consciousness. The drum itself is usually made from the trunk of the tree that the shaman associates with the World Tree, helping the beat resonate with the heart of the World Tree. Shamans use different drums or instruments for different kinds of journeys. One will be for healing, another for divination and prophecy, and a third for initiation or fertility rituals. Some drums are double headed, and one side is tuned lower than the other, to be the side hit for a Lower World journey, while the higher-pitched side is used for an Upper World journey. Other drums are single headed, like the Celtic bodhran, which also uses a double-headed beater to facilitate a quick beat.

The spirit of the drum is said to house the "shamanic steed," as many see the spirit of the drum like a horse or goat that carries the shaman into other worlds. Rituals to awaken the steed are performed to assure a successful journey. You must do a ritual to empower the drum, and thank it often. My own drum, from Native American crafters, came with instructions to oil it frequently. I correspond my oiling with the seasonal holidays of the Wheel of the Year, and create a simple thank-you ritual for the spirit of the drum. Others feed the drum with oil and even blood offerings. Similar drum traditions can be found in Voodoo. Drums are sometimes painted with spirit symbols. They can have the motifs of the magick circle, the four elements, or the four seasons. The drum can be used as a makeshift altar when no other tools are present, embodying the sacred circle.

Elemental Tools

Elemental tools are ritual tools for the four elements. They can be symbolic, for the smaller spirit bag; in miniature, such as a match, needle, thimble, and coin; or the actual classic ritual tools of Wicca—a wand, athame, chalice, and pentacle/stone.

Feathers

Feathers are used ceremonially for smudging and to represent the element of air. Different animals bring different qualities with the energy of their feathers.

Sometimes wings are made into feather fans. Feathers can be considered a fetish for winged animal allies.

Fetish

Traditionally fetishes are charms made from a part of an animal that comes from a hunt, such as hair, hide, or bone, or from the remains of an animal that died from natural causes. Other fetishes are more symbolic of the animal. They can be crafted from beads, stones, clay, herbs, thread, and other natural material. Stones with animal symbols painted or carved upon them are popular. A fetish acts as a touchstone talisman for your animal spirit, connecting you to its power. Carrying around the fetish, as a charm, reminds you of the animal's lessons, and when consecrated through intention and ritual (*OTOW*, exercise 27), lends you the spiritual and energetic support of that animal so you can more fully learn its lessons in your daily life.

Healer's Bag

Distinguished from a traditional spirit bag, the healer's bag, or medicine bundle, is larger and more practical in nature, containing ritual objects and medicinal quantities of herbs, potions, and oils. Such items wouldn't fit into the smaller spirit bag.

Healing Potions

Vials of potions for healing, protection, and cleansing are used in shamanic rituals. They can be a simple salt and water mixture empowered with pranic energy from your tree breathing exercise, or complex herbal remedies.

Holey Stone

This is a stone with a natural hole formed in it, usually found near a source of water. Holey stones are used to facilitate shamanic experience and attract allies. They can be kept in a pouch, worn on a string, or left on an altar. Legends say that if you look through the hole at the liminal points in the day—dawn, noon, sunset, or midnight—you will be able to see any faeries present. Holey stones are sacred to the one-eyed god Odin and are also known as enchanter's stones, faery stones, or hag stones.

Offerings

In the spirit of partnership, traditional shamans make offerings to the spirits

they call. The energy exchange helps build a bridge between worlds to the spirits and can effect a change in a person or landscape. Whenever you enter a sacred spot in nature to recharge your “batteries” and rejuvenate, you should offer something in return. If you don’t, you are simply taking and taking, and never replenishing the land. Native offerings included tobacco, cocoa leaves, and cornmeal. European offerings are powdered grain, honey, milk, eggs, coins, candles, and ale. Modern offerings include wine, beer, and chocolate. Water is a very appropriate offering to plant spirits. I make offerings of light, prayer, and intention, and most importantly, service. I exchange my time in sacred spaces with cleaning the trash and glass found near the edges of these spaces. Energy, from your time and effort to the energy raised in ritual, is the most important offering and exchange.

Mirrors

Mirrors are used for scrying, but they sometimes act as portals, doorways to journey into spiritual realms. Siberian shamans use small mirrors for both protection and healing. They use them to reflect unwanted energies. They also lay them on the body like a crystal healer will lay stones on the body, to bring healing and balance.

Pipe

Rituals pipes are common in many traditions. They are used to smoke sacred herbs, send prayers, and join others together in community. Sharing a pipe is a powerful ritual. Many of the most holy and trusted people of a community are the pipe carriers.

Rattle

Rattles are used much the same way drums are used, to aid the journey. Many people focus on awakening the spirit of the drum, but few talk about the spirit of the rattle, though it, too, has a spirit. Rattles can be made of bone, horn, animal shell, or dried gourd. The rattle itself can be decorated with symbols, feathers, and stones. My rattle is a hollowed horn filled with dried corn and sealed with black cloth, wrapped in purple cord, and decorated with crow feathers.

Shield

The shield is an artistic representation of the shaman’s inner world, the power

symbols they have received and images of their talents, adventures, and prowess. Shields and banners are found in many shamanic cultures, from Native American tribes to the European traditions.

Soul Retrieval Stone

This is a special stone or crystal reserved for doing soul retrieval work. Soul retrieval techniques will be discussed in chapter 15.

Spirit Bag

The spirit bag, or medicine pouch/medicine bag, is a container for sacred items and magickal tools, particularly the tools connected with the shaman's spirit allies. It is usually smaller and more symbolic in nature than the larger medicine bundles. I call this tool a witch bag. See the next section for instructions on how to make your own witch bag.

Stones

Special stones and crystals are used for healing and ritual. While it's great to collect many crystals and stones, most traditional healers choose a small number and work with them intimately. Small white-quartz river stones, gathered on riverbanks, are excellent healing stones. What is local is usually what is best for you. Stones are sometimes painted with simple sigils representative of universal energies, planets, stars, nature, and animals.

Tree

While some witches have a special tree physically close to their home that acts as a focus for the World Tree, others erect a pole as their symbolic tree. Such central poles are found in many tribal traditions. In Mongolian shamanism, an Oboo is the erected pole, and it's reminiscent of the pagan may pole of Beltane, a fertility marker also symbolic of the World Tree. The Mongolians also use a central fire, and it strikes me again how the bonfire is another traditional element of the Beltane celebration. In some Celtic Faery traditions, the great World Tree is called the Bilé. In the folk magick of the American South, the World Tree pole is called the Billy Tree or kissing post. In traditional Voodoo temples, a central post is called a potomitan. Made from a single tree trunk and colorfully decorated with a rainbow motif, it extends from floor to ceiling, serving as a focal point and connection to the spirits. The base acts as an altar, for offerings and for vevers (evocative symbols) that are placed upon

it. Raven Grimassi reports, in *The Witch's Craft,* that at a crossroads where three roads meet, a pole hung with three masks, one each facing a road, was erected in the name of Hecate, and called hekataion. This is another striking example of a representation of the central axis and the three worlds, though here they are represented horizontally, by three roads, rather than vertically.

Staff

Though an extension of the wand in form and function, the staff has associations with travel and journey, both as a walking stick and in shamanism. The priestess or priest of a tribe would carry a sacred branch of the sacred tree associated with the World Tree. In some traditions of witchcraft, the double-headed stang, symbolic of the horned god, was used as both a staff and an altar centerpiece. Others alternately see the "V" shape as the vagina, and view it as a symbol for the Goddess. Siberian shamans used long poles of wood or metal to conduct energy and spirits.

In Celtic shamanism, the silver branch is used (Figure 20). Referring to myths of a silver branch with bell-like fruit, the branch would be rung to announce the bard's tale or song. In the tale of *Cormac's Adventures in the Land of Promise,* a warrior revealed to be Manannan mac Lir held a silver branch with three chiming golden apples called the Craebh Ciuil. Legend says that it heals the sick and causes people to go to sleep. A more modern version of it, with three to nine small bells on it, is rung to open the gates between worlds. Siberian shamans use bells frequently, and turn-of-the-century mediums described bell-like music announcing their presence on the astral plane. Modern silver branches can be created by taking a branch, usually apple or birch, and stripping it of bark. Paint the branch silver, and fasten bells to it. The branch is rung in the four directions before a journey, or used much like a rattle to induce trance.



Figure 20: *Silver Branch*

These are not the only shamanic tools you can have. Anything can be a shamanic ally tool. Modern shamans might consider a CD player a valuable tool and ally.

When you find or receive power tools for your shamanic work, many traditions have certain beliefs and regulations about them. Some believe they must be found or received as a gift. Others feel that if you purchase them, you should never negotiate the price. Some feel the hand with which you pick it up is significant, or the side of your path on which you find it is important. To receive it in the left hand or to find it on the left side of the path means it is for you, while on the right means you should pass it by because it's not for you. I don't necessarily agree. In the end, trust your intuition as to what tool is right for you.

Witch Bag

Many shamanic traditions make use of a spirit bag, more popularly known as a medicine bag or pouch, as the primary shamanic tool. The bag acts like a tool kit for the traveling healer and a talisman for their spirit allies. I prefer to call it the witch bag or witch pouch.

In the Celtic shamanic traditions, the spirit pouch is referred to as a crane bag, named after a magickal talisman of Celtic myth. Most frequently associated with the bardic hero Fionn mac Cumhail, and also Taliesin, the origin of the crane bag lies with the sea god Mannanan Mac Lir, as access to the contents would change with the changing tides. In Mannanan's crane bag were several tools that would seemingly be too large to fit into a simple pouch, yet they do. Contained within are Mannanan's shirt, the knife-hook of the smith god Goibniu, the King of Scotland's shears, the King of Lochlainn's helmet, the bones of Asal's swine, and the girdle of a great whale's back. In his book *The Celtic Shaman,* John Matthews suggests pairing the elemental symbols of the shirt with water, knife with fire, sheers with air, and helmet with earth. The other tools can be symbolic of the powers of life, death, and transformation, since the oceans are associated with the Celtic Underworld and tales of magickal swine that regenerate are quite typical of Celtic lore. The specific myths associated with these items seem to be lost to modern readers.

In Strega traditions (Italian witchcraft), such a bag would be known as a nanta bag. It is viewed less in a shamanic context, but still as magickal and healing. The nanta bag contains traditional ritual tools and symbols of the four elements, as well as vials of wine or oil used for healing, allowing the witch to

practice anywhere without needing larger tools that would draw suspicion.

Native American traditions hold the most popular image of the spirit bag, referred to as a medicine bag because it holds the healing power of the spirits. The concept can be found in Aztec and Incan traditions of shamans. The Andean shaman-priests call the bag a mesa. The mesa contains special stones, or khuyas, that were blessed by the shaman's teachers or found in special sacred sites. The mesa is very important to Andean ritual work, and is used in healing, initiation, and exchanging energy.

Mongolian shamans think of the medicine bag as a very special ongon, or fetish charm, that houses a spirit. It is the ongon of the shaman's main spirit guide.

A variety of pouch traditions exist, each with its own guidelines and taboos. Pouches can hold a wide variety of items, from actual ritual objects listed in the previous section, to items more symbolic in nature of the spirit allies you develop. You can place stones, herbs, hair, feathers, crystals, nuts, or anything else that is sacred to you in the bag.

Some open the bag to use the tools in a practical manner, while others don't take out any items once they are placed in the bag, it being more of a symbolic talisman than a toolbox. Certain traditions distinguish between a medicine bag and a medicine bundle. The smaller bag is reserved for tools that are symbolic of the spirit allies and medicines a shaman intimately calls, while the larger bundle contains more practical ritual tools. For many, the opening of the pouch is a ritual with songs, chants, and blessings offered. They have to sing a song for every item in the bag when opening or closing it.

Medicine bags vary in size, construction, and materials ranging from sacred animal skins to more traditional fabrics. Color is important, as each color has a magickal purpose. The color you choose should reflect your intentions. Shamanic witches who use a witch bag usually use black, brown, or tan. Others use dyes or colored cloth based on their personal power colors or astrological sun sign correspondences. Color correspondences can be found in the first two books of the Temple of Witchcraft series.

My own witch bag has changed over the years. I have one smaller ritual bag that contains both practical and symbolic tools. I have items in it saved from my childhood to more recent times. My first quartz crystal is in it, along with fetishes for my animal totems, such as horse hair, wolf hair, and a crow

feather. I carry a wheat penny for the grain goddess, a Mercury dime for the magick god, an acorn for my World Tree, a hazelnut for wisdom, a mistletoe sprig, small stones to represent the four elements, a rock from Sedona given to me by one of my first teachers, a meteorite fragment, a fossil, a few small vials of my favorite herbal potions, loose herbs that I have harvested and dried myself that act as my power plants, pieces of amber and jet, a chunk of copal given to me by a Mayan shaman, my first silver pentacle, and a gold medallion of St. Christopher that my great aunt gave me when I was a child. She has passed and is one of my strongest ancestor allies now.

Some of the items are practical. I take them out and use them in ritual. I arrange them around myself or others when I am doing shamanic journey. Others I just like to have near me in my bag. When I shake it, it jumbles and rattles. It's not musical, but it has a beat, a vibration to it, that I can feel. The most important common thread is that all these items are sacred to me. They carry the energy of my spiritual allies and my past quests. Many came to me before I knew anything about witchcraft, but I knew they were important.

I also carry a large leather shoulder bag that houses my rituals tools for when I do ceremony in the woods or make "house calls" to others who need my services. It contains a mix of shamanic tools and traditional Wiccan altar tools, but represents the very basic tools that I could need—incense, chalice, athame, wand, runes, crystal ball, black mirror, blindfold, CD player, and some stones.

Exercise 8

Building Your Own Witch Bag

To build your own witch bag, first meditate and determine what size you need. Do you want a small charm pouch to wear like a necklace talisman? Do you want a larger, more practical pouch? Do you need a bundle? Do you need more than one?

You might find a pouch you like that is already crafted. Or you could make your own. Take a piece of soft hide or cloth in a circle with a diameter of ten to twenty inches, depending on the size you want. Punch holes around the edge, and thread two cords through it to act as a drawstring. Some people embellish the outside of the bag, while others leave it plain. It's up to you.

Then begin to collect your objects. There is no rush. You have your whole life to collect power objects. They will come as needed. It is not like collecting stamps to fill out your collection. They are spiritual allies and will come with time. When you put something into your bag, be sure you want to do so, because it is like putting something inside of you. The state of your witch bag is directly related to the state of your inner being. Sometimes less is more, particularly when you start. Is something really sacred and important to you? If so, put it in. If it's just pretty, then wait and think about it.

The items that belong in your witch bag will become more obvious to you as your experience grows. For now, I suggest starting with something relating to your World Tree. Put a twig, leaf, or nut of the tree you associate with the World Tree in the bag. Add one special object that is tied to your shamanic quest, acting like the "seed" of your enlightenment. Mine was my first quartz point given to me by my father. If you have anything given to you by a teacher or guide on the path, it would be appropriate.

Put in something for the four elements. Go on a quest for the appropriate items, meditating and reflecting on your relationship with each element as you do so. Fire can be a match, twig, or stone from the desert. Air can be incense or a stone from a high mountain. Water can be a river/ocean stone or a vial of special water. Earth can be any stone of significance, or salt.

You can use an object for the Goddess and God. Then let things come to you. As you journey and make spirit allies, you may find objects that are linked to your animal, plant, and mineral allies. A divine being may give you an object in a journey or dream, and you will find a similar object in the waking Middle World.

As you visit special locations that have significance to you, you might acquire power objects from those places. Before you take anything, commune with the guardian spirit to get permission. Leave an offering, and if you feel intuitively that it is accepting your offering, take a small stone, twig, or other object. The item will link your energy and witch bag to the energy of the sacred site.

When you put an object into the spirit bag for the first time, make a ritual of it. Make it a ceremony, and invite the spirit of the object to awaken and partner with you. I cast a magick circle and open up my pouch. If I associate the object with a particular element or direction, I face that direction. I then say a prayer to invite the spirit's energy into my life. When putting my hazelnut into my bag, I

said something like this:

> *I, [state your name], ask in the name of the Goddess and the God to awaken the power of the hazel within me. I ask for wisdom, poetry, and words of eloquence. I ask for the blessings of hazel, and seek to partner with it in this world. So mote it be.*

Do similar rituals with each addition to the witch bag. In future lessons, if you learn a spirit song for a particular totem, singing the song or doing its dance when placing the object in your medicine bag will awaken it. Be creative, and seek to go deep into spiritual partnership with your allies and these power objects.

The Energy of the Middle World

Working with energy in ritual and meditation is critical for shamanic work. Shamans transform the energy of themselves, people, and places. The energy of the Middle World is a mixture of the energies embodied by the Upper and Lower Worlds because they cross here. I don't refer to this mix of energies as positive and negative, as so many people do. Energy is not always in the realm of absolutes. Things are not always black and white. Just like we have more than two worlds, we have more than two energies.

I think of energy as a spectrum of various grades (Figure 21). One end represents more subtle and refined energy. It is more harmonious and life-affirming. The other end represents more dense or heavy energy. It is more stagnant or disruptive. The two might can be called "positive" and "negative," respectively, but some energy falls in between. With a spectrum, it's all relative. If you label the spectrum from 1 to 10, with 1 being the densest and 10 being the most refined, if you are at energy level 4, something at level 6 is very refined and harmonious to you. If you are at level 9, something that is energetically moving at level 6 is very dense. It's all a matter of perspective. Andean shaman priests use the concepts of refined and dense energies, which they call sami and hoocha. The Andean shamans, particularly noted by the teaching of the Q'ero Indian tradition, do not travel to the spirit worlds like other shamans, but interface with the dense and refined energies from each, to effect change.

Refined and dense energies are not good or bad, nor good or evil, in any way. Symbolically they are the energies of the Upper World and Lower World, with the Middle World being a mix of the two. Living in the Middle World, we need a balance of all energies in the correct proportions. Our balance is ever changing, ever fluctuating, rather than static, because life in the Middle World is about change. Our hierarchies of spiritual worlds represent different planes of density. We need both energies to survive in the Middle World. We cannot survive solely on one or the other.

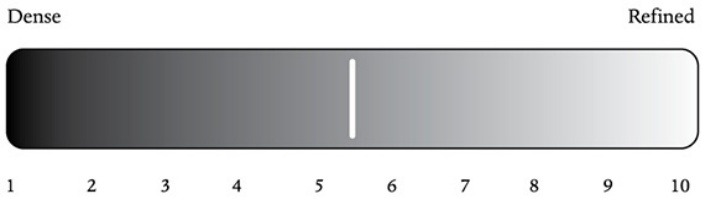


Figure 21: *Spectrum of Energies*

Energies of similar vibration need to gather together. Dense energy naturally gathers to the Lower World, but it is not “evil.” Refined energy naturally gathers to the Upper World, but it is not “good.” The balance depends on the situation you are in, and your own natural balance.

Sometimes you make an offering to the Underworld of your dense energy. Underworld goddesses and gods are associated with fear, anger, and disease because they accept our dense energy. They absorb those energies to help heal you. Other times you need to release Upper World energies. You ground yourself after a very energetically intense ritual, getting your head out of the clouds and more in touch with the physical by drawing upon denser energies and releasing excess refined energy.

When you draw upon one type of energy, you release the other. They are not opposites, but complements, like the yin and yang energies of Asian mysticism. They appear to the casual observer to have opposite charges.

Balance is the key to working with energy. Think of the energies of both worlds as feeding your inner World Tree. You need the energy above, represented by rain, air, and sunlight. You need the energy below, in the soil, minerals, and absorbed water. Without both, your tree will wither.

Once you understand that energy manifests as a spectrum, you can change the energy to suit your need with your magickal will. You can make an offering of excess energy to either world, or draw in the necessary energy from either

world. You have already been doing that to a certain extent all your life. You have been doing it with your pranic tree breathing exercise (chapter 5). Now we bring your awareness of energy to your daily life, expanding the techniques and using them to help you find balance every day.

Two techniques in the Middle World are very important to learn and can transform the way you move in the Middle World, even in your day-to-day life. The first is to transmute any energy that is harmful to you. We do this in traditional magick by separating ourselves from it. We create shields, wards, and barriers, using our will to prevent anything from penetrating it. That technique has its merits, but it fosters a sense of separation and of being "on guard" because the energy is just lurking, waiting to strike. Transmutation is more holistic, seeking to neutralize the problem and prevent it from worsening. Andean shamans "eat" heavy energy through their spiritual stomachs to digest it, transmute it, and prevent it from harming anything. In essence, they are refining, balancing, and ordering the energy. They are neither attaching to nor rejecting any living energy, but simply letting it pass through. One is not better or worse than another, just necessary at different times. While learning this on her spiritual adventure detailed in *Initiation,* Elizabeth B. Jenkins found parallels between the Andean philosophy, Buddhism, and Jungian psychology regarding the shadow. Learning to incorporate all energies, both refined and dense, will help you in your future shamanic work and your shadow-healing experience.

The spiritual stomach relates to one of five centers, or bands, that are around the aura, as described in this shamanic tradition. The Andeans call the aura, or energy bubble, the poq'po. In each band is an energy center that is like a focus, or eye, for the band. Practitioners insist that they are not the same as any Hindu teaching on the chakras, but with the five bands and the top and bottom points, they seem to be another interpretation of the seven-layer chakra system. The main difference is that the chakras are most often viewed inside the body, while these bands are on the outside, around the aura. I think of them as an expansion of the chakras, extended to the energy "bubble" of the aura.

The band considered the spiritual stomach, near the navel, is referred to as the qosqo. In healing work, the stomach, liver, gall bladder, and adrenal glands are all connected to the solar plexus, where we digest and burn our energy to

fuel our body and energy system. These organs are about filtering, metabolizing, and expressing your power. Shamans in the Andean tradition open this energy center and absorb the unwanted energies, devouring it and grounding the transmuted energy into the earth and Underworld.

Exercise 9

Eating Heavy Energy

1. Focus your attention, and get yourself into a light meditative state. If you learned your instant magick trigger in exercise 12 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft,* then do your trigger now.

2. Ground yourself, imagining your roots, your pranic tube, descending into the earth.

3. Bring your awareness to the solar plexus and the energy it projects outward through to the edge of your aura. With your will and intention, imagine the edge of the aura in front of the solar plexus expanding or opening, much like a “mouth.”

4. Draw the unwanted dense energy into this opening, like a vacuum sucking it up.

5. Feel the energy go through a transformative process, like digestion, breaking down the dense energy into its basic components. You can qualify the energy by thinking, “Neutralize” or “Perfect Love, Perfect Trust,” as you transform it.

6. As the energy goes through a fiery purification process, you can feel it separate into two different “currents,” one heavy and one dense. Like the intestines, we discern the difference between the two, absorbing the refined, healthy energy like we absorb nutrients, while shedding the dense energy like we release waste. Draw the dense energy through the body and down into your lower pranic tube, down into your roots and into the earth. It can no longer harm you or anyone else ever again.

7. Bring your awareness back to the “mouth” and solar plexus. Use your will to bring the energy level back down to a “normal” day-to-day state, and close the opening.

The solar plexus is one of the places we naturally shield when we are in the presence of someone or something that bothers us. We fiercely guard our sense of power. I used to fold my arms over my solar plexus area, to keep it shielded. With this new technique, we don't have to feel vulnerable or feel the need for absolute, impenetrable shielding. By incorporating the energy into us, we recognize that we are not separate. We are all connected. We learn to identify and confront, rather than shy away in fear or seek to control. By letting the energy pass through us, we learn a valuable lesson that nothing can harm us as long as we are not attached to it and simply let it pass through us.

Although not from the Andean tradition, I know practitioners whose magick is intimately tied to snake medicine and the snake clans. They use a similar technique of absorbing, transforming, and releasing unwanted energy, like the transforming snake shedding its skin. I did similar energy work before learning the Andean model, but the concept of a "spiritual stomach" has greatly refined the process for me.

If you attempt to transform energy in this matter and cannot feel it separate into two forces, or if it feels completely overwhelming before the separation can occur, then your energies may not be compatible at this time, and it would be best to simply cleanse and shield yourself without transforming the energy. Start out small with this technique. As you develop a team of inner spiritual guides in future lessons, they will advise you when the digesting technique is appropriate.

The Earth Mother

The most powerful manifestation of the Middle World is the earth itself, in its multidimensional consciousness. The earth exists in its own way on all three planes, but we associate the consciousness of the planet with the Middle World. The Earth Mother is the collective consciousness of all matter, of life itself. One could take the concept of the embodied goddess to the next step, as the universal star goddess, who is all matter, everywhere, not just the earth. She has reflections below as the Underworld goddesses and reflections above as the star and sky goddesses, but the entire material world is an embodiment of the Goddess.

The cycle of the seasons, the circle of life, best tells the story of the Mother

Goddess and her consort. The symbol of the wheel embodies the spirit of the Middle World—change. Perhaps this is why witches work so much in the middle realm, through rituals and celebrations, focusing so strongly on the Wheel of the Year (*OTOW,* chapter 14), while other shamanic traditions travel more to the Upper World and Underworld.

Do a journey in the Middle World to the loving heart of the Earth Mother. Develop a conscious relationship with the earth, and grow with her.

Greco-Roman	Gaia, Rhea, Cybele
Egyptian	Geb/Seb (the Egyptians saw the earth itself as male, the god Geb, and the sky as female)
Sumerian	Tiamat, Ninhursag, Inanna
Celtic	Danu, Don, Modron
Norse	Freya, Frigga
Slavic	Mokos, Mati Syra Zemlya
Lithuanian	Zemyna
Mongolian	Gazar Eej
Hindu	Uma, Prthivi
African	Ala (Ibo/Nigerian)
North American	Awitelin Tsta (Zuni), Estsanatlehi (Navaho), Nokomis (Algonquin), Yolkai Estasan (Navajo)
Mayan	Ixchel
Aztec	Coatlicue, Tozi
Incan	Pachamama or Mama Pacha, Mama Allpa

Figure 22: *Names for the Earth Goddess*

Exercise 10
Earth Mother Journey

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, cast your sacred space. Start your journey music, and assume the appropriate trance posture. For this exercise I suggest that you simply lie on your back. Have any power objects or tools you desire at hand, and wear your blindfold.

2. Start Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts. Count slowly, but in time with the drumbeats. If this is

too distracting for you, you can skip the countdown and attempt to go directly into the journey.

3. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey:

I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

4. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

5. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World Tree. Know the World Tree.

6. State your intention. The intention for this journey is simply to explore. Put your intention into the World Tree:

I ask to journey to the Earth Mother, to be in her presence and communicate with her. So mote it be.

7. Follow your intuition to find the Earth Mother. You most likely will go into the roots of the tree, just below the surface. You may be called to walk away from the tree, into another place in the Middle World. Some journeyers rise up into the sky of the Middle World and fly to the mountains of the Mother.

8. Let your experience guide you on this journey. Commune with the Earth Mother. Speak to her. Introduce yourself if you have never talked to her before. Listen to her messages for you.

9. When done, hearing the callback, return the way you came. Go back to the base of the World Tree, and thank it for this journey. Thank the Earth Mother herself. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Do any necessary closing rituals.

You may have noticed that unlike many guided meditations, I didn't guide you

through what to experience. Instructions and techniques act as a bridge, but once you cross into nonordinary reality, you must let the divine guide you. Everyone's experience will be unique, and when you repeat these journeys, they will be different each time.

I suggest doing this journey many times to keep in contact with Mother Earth. She can be an invaluable guide, teacher, and friend while we walk with her in this life. Take the time to get to know her better.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 8–10 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

Continuing Assignments

- Keep a traditional journal of your magickal experiences and those in your day-to-day life.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Practice the Second Attention exercises outlined in chapter 2.

Tips

- Don't worry about finding the "perfect" shamanic tools right away. Like your quest for traditional altar tools, put out the intention for what you need and want, seek them out, but be patient and open to guidance.
- If you work with a drum, experiment with it. Play and enjoy it. Work with different tempos and beats. Beats counted out in two balance polarity. They have a more direct pattern, sometimes perceived as masculine. Beats of three, like a waltz, have a spiraling goddess energy to them. Beats of four are associated with the four elements, and are solid and dynamic. All the different beats have their own gifts. Explore and find what works best for you. When you are ready, do a consecration ritual to awaken and attune to the spirit of your drum.
- Be aware of the dense and refined energies in your life, and integrate the exercises from this chapter into your daily routines, transforming unwanted energies as needed.
- Try "eating" or absorbing the energy of your environment. This is not

necessarily a defense mechanism, but a way in which you can psychically "read" a particular place without harming yourself, like doing a "taste test." You can also use this technique to absorb spiritual energies from a sacred site where the ley lines converge to empower yourself, assuming you have permission of the guardian spirit of that space and the Earth Mother.

• Be mindful of the Earth Mother wherever you are. Keep in contact with her. Don't be intimidated by her vastness. She wants you to develop a deeper relationship with her. Keep her in your thoughts all the time, and speak to her whenever you can.

[contents]

7

Lesson Three
The Underworld Path

On the path of the witch, building a relationship with the Lower World is critical. To work between the worlds, to claim the heart of magick, we must face what is beneath the rock of our consciousness. We must lift it up and see what fears are waiting for us. Usually the monsters beneath the rock are not as big or frightening as we believed. Shamanic witches must travel where others fear to tread. Like the Underworld goddess, in her most ancient myths, we must descend to truly understand ourselves and be transformed.

The Underworld

The Underworld, or Lower World, is a realm surrounded by many misconceptions. Even among shamanic traditions, opinions vary on its purpose and nature. Due to our Western world, good-versus-evil conditioning, most people naturally assume if there is a place of light and goodness, then it must have an antithesis, a place of darkness and evil, but assumptions are not always correct.

In magick, we learn there are no absolutes. Energy is a spectrum of dense and refined energies. All polarities do not equate with each other. Traditionally the dark, feminine, intuitive, and receptive qualities are found at one end of the pole, and many have equated these qualities with the forces of evil. Just because something is from the Underworld, or dark, does not mean it's evil, harmful, or dangerous. You can find dangers in the Underworld, but you can also find them in the Upper World and, most importantly, in the Middle World, where walking down the street, driving a car, or taking a prescription drug can be a dangerous act.

The Underworld is the foundation of the physical realm, like the earth below our feet, providing stability when we stand. The Underworld is like the soil in which plants anchor their roots. The Underworld is the spiritual soil out of which

the physical world grows. Others call it the etheric, astral, or emotional plane, but here things take shape and form in the subtle energies. From here, physical reality draws its substance, like a plant drawing minerals out of the soil to build its stalk, leaf, and flower.

Shamanic witches see the Underworld as more feminine, intuitive, emotional, and dreamlike. This Lower World deals more with our emotions and primal needs, and like the lower self, speaks to us through our intuition and symbols. Modern psychologists would think of this as the vast collective unconscious, but if you know how to work in the Underworld, it becomes quite conscious.

Traditions that view the Underworld as an evil place usually think of material reality and nature as evil or somehow less than divine. Certain Gnostic- and Zoroastrian-influenced traditions look at the world as a prison in which we are trapped and from which we must escape. They influenced the later view of the Upper and Lower Worlds, heaven and hell, as being absolutes and polar opposites rather than natural complements. Such traditions typically do not look highly upon the role of women. Feminine energy, intuition, expressing primal emotions, and sexuality are not encouraged as a part of these paths. All these qualities were wrapped up together and labeled “evil” or “less than.” It takes quite a bit of will to undo this conditioning.

To the witch, all realms are divine. None is more important than the others. All are necessary. Saying the Upper World is more important than the other two realms is like saying your brain is more important than your heart. You need both to survive and thrive. The material world is the divine made manifest. The Underworld is a place of healing. The beings in the Underworld are concerned with supporting and sustaining the Middle World by entering into a reciprocal relationship with those in the Middle World. The Underworld and the Goddess can be difficult powers to experience, even frightening, but they are a necessary part of life. If you make friends with the Underworld powers, you need never fear them.

Like the lower self acting as a bridge and messenger between our conscious middle self and the higher self, the Lower World acts as a bridge, a middle territory between us and the heavenly realm. Although we view it as lower than the middle, and seemingly disconnected from the heavens, a better way to look at it is to look at our physical world as a symbolic model for the three

shamanic realms. The heavens hold the stars and sun. Light descends down to the earth and warms the ground, bringing spring and making crops grow. Animals eat the plants, and people eat the plants and animals to sustain life. We are living off this heavenly energy, but we cannot process it directly. We can't live off sunlight, the power from above. Likewise, we cannot live off dirt and soil. We need minerals and metals, but they must be part of our food, or at least digestible vitamins. To sustain us, the life energy needs to descend from above, go down below us, and grow up into our world in more useful forms. All three realms are interconnected.

When you are open to all three realms and carry no prejudices, you will find that the Lower World is more accessible. Being in the Middle World, we are rooted to the Lower World. It responds more readily to our daily needs. Many seek to escape the tough lessons of the Middle and Lower Worlds, and focus solely on the Upper World, but my Underworld experiences have prepared me for deeper work on all three planes. Witchcraft is the middle path, and if you can't find balance in your daily life and health, it's hard to focus on the lofty concepts of the world above.

Though each culture views the paths below differently, some common themes have been established. Although usually depicted as being underground, the Lower World seems endless. It usually appears to be in an infinite cavern where you can never reach the walls. The terrain is primal, with vast stretches of forest or jungle. The vegetation makes it difficult to see far. You can feel like you are in the dark. Though the Underworld is lit from within, you cannot see a sun. The light emanates from the land itself. Others claim to see a dark sun, or luminescent moon, that is very different from the heavenly bodies of our waking world. Most shamans report that there are no stars in the Lower World, or at least none that can be seen easily. The realm appears to be structured in layers. The deeper you go into the Underworld, the more psychologically intense are the territories and beings you encounter, until you reach a deep realm of inner life, as if the stars are held within the land of the Underworld. It is as if you are reaching the Upper World by diving deep into the Underworld, following a loop in our shamanic reality. Seers and mystics describe the heart of the earth as the brightest star of the heavens.

Andean shamans of the Incan traditions translate Ukhu Pacha as the interior world. To me, those words have a different ring than Underworld or Lower

World. The interior world is much like the landscape of our interior life. I wonder if our modern sci-fi myths of a Hollow Earth are really modern interpretations of this interior/ Lower World, much like how our conceptions of aliens may be translations of Upper World and faery spirits.

Though they differ from shaman to shaman, here are some commonly accepted themes found in Lower World journeying.

Ancestors

The realm of the ancestors is usually found in the Lower World. The ancestral realm is considered to be the Lower World territory closest to the physical world, because the spirits of our ancestors are still involved in our lives and offer support. Tribal people say that we stand on the shoulders of the ancestors, so they are literally beneath our feet. The ancestor territory is not to be confused with earthbound spirits and ghosts. This is the realm where a spirit has crossed over into the next world. Such crossing provides a different, more spiritual viewpoint where the ancestor can provide counsel and energy. Shamans visit the realm of the ancestors to get the guidance and teachings from those who have walked the path before. The realm of the ancestors is called Summerland or Apple Land. Those who reside there have eternal light, summer, warmth, and feasting while they await their time to return to the world. Such delights are considered paradise because of the harsh climate realities of the pagan European cultures.

Animal Spirits

Shamans encounter a variety of “real” and mythic animal spirits in the Lower World. The animal self is most strongly associated with the lower self and the Lower World, so contact with animal spirits is strongest in the Lower World. Such spirits might act as guides. Others will test you, and act as guardians for certain lands, power, and knowledge.

Cauldron

The image of the cauldron is a primal symbol of the Underworld. A variety of goddesses and gods are masters of the cauldron. In the Irish Celtic mythos, the cauldron of the Dagda, the Undry, offers an abundant source of food and is one of the four sacred gifts of the Celtic gods, including a magickal spear, sword, and stone. Cerridwen is the mistress of cauldron in Welsh Celtic myths.

She brews a potion of knowledge and poetry for her dark and ugly son, Afagddu, but the recipient turns out to be her servant, Gwion, who is transformed into Taliesin the Bard. Such deities might offer food or drink, or even submerge you in the cauldron for a wide range of magickal effects, including healing and inspiration. Other shamans are cooked or burned in the cauldron as part of a test or initiation.

Faery Realm

Many European traditions view the fair folk, the fey, as living beneath the land and being intimately tied with it. The faery courts are strongly linked with the realms of the ancestors and elements. Openings to their realms are in earthen mounds and tree trunks, and beneath stones and graves. Like animals and ancestors, they can act as guides and allies to the shamanic witch.

Fates

The deities of fate, popularly embodied by the Norse concept of fate, the three Norns, or Wyrd sisters, are said to dwell in the Underworld. The Greeks call the triple fates the Moerae. Although truly of the past, present, future, and all three worlds, the Norse myths place the fates in the Underworld, watering the roots of the World Tree with the waters of a magickal well to ensure the continuation of the cycle of life in all worlds and to heal the damage done to the World Tree by the chthonic forces.

Forge

Deities of the forge reside in the Underworld, close to the source of all their raw materials. While modern people think of blacksmithing as a labor, in the ancient world such work was both art and magick. Cultures with blacksmiths had blacksmith deities. Such deities and their protégés are master magicians who transform ore into useful tools, and craft them with magickal symbols and spiritual blessings. The path of the forge is a path of creativity and magick as well as self-healing. The fires of the forge are a symbol of the enlightenment process. The Greek god of the forge is Hephaestus, while his Roman counterpart is Vulcan. In the Middle East, the forge god is Tubal Cain. To the Northern European tribes, he is Weiland. To the Celts, Gobinnon and his two brothers act as master forges, but most importantly, the Celts have a goddess of the forge, Brid, or Bridget. One of her three talents is smithcrafting, along

with healing and poetry.

Giants

Tales from across the world speak of a time when giants walked the worlds. They appear in myths ranging from the Greeks, Norse, and Celts to the Americas. To some, they are the primal forces of nature, wild, uninhibited, and somewhat removed from humanity. The Greeks saw them as Titans, the first race of gods. Most were eventually overthrown and imprisoned in the underworlds by the next generation of gods, the Olympians. Some are wise and some are dangerous. Underworld travelers can encounter these primal powers, these elder gods, deep below the earth.

Guardians

World myths describe a guardian spirit at the gates of the underworlds preventing spirits from leaving their appropriate places. Guardians are deities, demigods, or a variety of mythic creatures. In particular, dog or wolflike guardians are common. Best known is the Greek Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the gates of Hades. Norse mythology has the single-headed dog Garm, who guards Hel until the final days. Although a god and not a creature, some Egyptian practitioners equate the jackal-headed Anubis with the same function, as both guide and guard to the dead. Aztec shamans find their underworld, Mictlan, guarded by a similar figure named Xolotl, depicted as a dog or as a man with a dog's head.

Island Paradise

In many shamanic views, the land of the Underworld is an island paradise in the west, sometimes above the water and sometimes below. Though the paradisal island image blurs our concepts of the Underworld with the those of Upper World, as most think of the Upper World as a heavenly paradise, the Underworld island is characterized by an enlightened, peaceful society of spiritual individuals, not mortals yet not quite gods, and quite often exclusively women. Those who attend to the visitors on the island never grow old and never die. To those who know the way and are deemed worthy, the inhabitants offer healing and knowledge. From these island journeys come the myths of Avalon, the immortal summerland of apples in Celtic myth, the Celtic Fortunate Isles of nine sister goddesses, and perhaps our most idealized image of an

island paradise, Atlantis.

Plant Spirits

Just as animal spirits can be found in the Underworld, the primal root consciousness of plant spirits are found in the Underworld. Shamans form partnerships with plant spirits. The plant spirits teach the shamans their medicinal and magickal secrets. Shamans with a strong connection to plant spirits can heal with that plant's spirit energy, even if their patient has not taken any of the physical plant in an herbal remedy. Mineral spirits can also be found in the Lower World.

Rivers and Lakes

Bodies of water are common sites in the Underworld, and the liquid of each is said to contain magickal properties. Some contain water, while others contain blood, honey, milk, or stardust. Crossing the water can trigger blessings or curses upon the one who crosses it. Rivers are considered thresholds or territory markers to maintain boundaries and borders. One river is of forgetfulness. A soul, before being reborn into the world, will drink from it to enter the world fresh and clear as a newborn child without conscious past-life memories. Other rivers contain memories and powers to be retrieved. Spirits and gods act as guides on the waterways. In Celtic myth, Manannan Mac Lyr, son of the sea god Lyr, acts as a guide. In Greek cosmology, Charon is the ferryman of the Underworld river Styx. The deceased must pay two coins to take his ferry.

Root Monster

Many shamanic cosmologies hold that a vast monstrous being, reptilian in nature, dwells in the roots of the World Tree. I feel it is the spirit embodying our collective, universal shadow. Primal, unconscious, and chthonic, it gnaws at the roots of the tree. Embodiments of a snake, dragon, crocodile, or lizard are common. Norse myth tells us of the dragon Nidhogg, who devours the roots of the World Tree. Mayan myth has the crocodile at its roots. In Egyptian mythology, the destructive force of the serpent Apophis awaits the descent of the barge of the sun god Ra in the Underworld. Modern ceremonial magick equates Apophis and Typhon. Perhaps our association with reptiles and the Underworld as evil originates in our unconscious knowledge of this collective

shadow, personified as a reptilian monster. To the shamanic witch, such a being is not evil but simply a force in the cosmic balance.

Underworld Kings and Queens

The realms of the lower worlds reflect the divine as Underworld kings and queens. Some are benevolent and some are frightening. Many act in unison, as Underworld Lord and Lady, but they are sometimes encountered individually. Though many have fears about such meetings, I have found the Underworld gods to be the most loving, forgiving, and healing of all my divine encounters.

Wells and Springs

The Lower World contains many wells and springs. In fact, the physical wells and springs from which we drink are the gateways of healing power to rise from the Underworld into the Middle World. Certain wells in Europe are still considered sacred to the pagan goddesses and gods, though renamed after saints. The waters of the various wells of Bridget are still powerful and sacred healing tools used by Christians and pagans alike. The Underworld wells and springs can act like the mystic rivers and lakes, or like the cauldrons of power. In Norse myth, three wells feed the roots of the World Tree. One is the Well of Mimir, holding the severed head of Mimir the prophet, preserved through magick by Odin. Odin consults the head for guidance and wisdom. It's the well of memory, wisdom, and collective consciousness. The second is the Well of Urd, or Fate. Here gather the three fate sisters, the Norns. Considered a fountain of life or healing, the sisters sprinkle the water on the World Tree to heal it from damage. Along with Nidhogg at its roots, four giant wild harts live in the middle worlds, eating the World Tree's leaves and buds. The third is the spring of Hvergelmir in Hel. At this spring, Hel is defended against the storm giants by the watchman Ivaldi and his family.

Greek	Hades, Tartarus, Elysium
Egyptian	Duat, Amenti, Neter-khertet, Aaru
Sumerian	Dilmun, Edinu
Celtic	Annwynn/Annwn, Ddaer, Avalon, Mag Mell, Tir na n-Og
Norse	Helheim, Svartlheim, Niflheim
Slavic	Nav
Hindu	Svarga
Voodoo	Guinee

Mayan	Xibalba, Metnal
Aztec	Mictlan, the lowest of the nine hells
Incan	Ukhu Pacha

Figure 23: *Lower World Names*

Power Animals

Magickal traditions across the world honor the wisdom and power of the animal world. Animals have almost nothing separating their instinctual wisdom from their higher divine self. They are not as impeded by the middle self since they do not work through the ego in the way humans do. They have not forgotten the natural wisdom of the world.

As the other worlds are populated with all manner of spirits, animal spirits are found there, too. Some animal spirits are the spirits of animals who died in the Middle World. Others never incarnated in the Middle World. Many encounter the overarching spirit of an animal consciousness, its archetypal being. When they encounter a raven, it's not simply a raven, but Raven, the originating spirit of all ravens. These archetypal spirits are much like the elemental rulers to the elemental realms. They embody the accumulated wisdom and power of a species. You can interact with individual animal spirits, with individual names and personalities, as well as with the overarching animal archetypes.

Just as many in conventional religions believe that each person has a guardian angel or protective spirit, most shamanic traditions teach that each shaman, and in fact each person, has a primary animal spirit. This animal is connected to the lower self, our instinctual wisdom, and acts as both a protector and guide. Some think of the animal spirit as the personification of the lower self, while others think of it as an entirely separate entity. Siberian shamans consider the animal spirit as one of the many shamanic selves, or souls, and believe that the animal spirit resides within the body of the shaman, coming out when called.

In the shamanic worlds, animals act as intermediaries between the human world and the divine. They act as guides, protectors, and teachers on our shamanic journeys. Our primary animal teacher is usually called a totem or power animal. In the Aztec traditions, the animal totem is the nagual. In Norse

shamanism, this tutelary spirit is called a fetch, referring to a being that can take an animal shape, along with a human or abstract geometric form. The animal term common to witchcraft, popularly cited during the medieval period, is the familiar, though the word causes some confusion because of its many interpretations.

Medieval European witches were said to have a familiar spirit, an animal that helped them do magick. This extraordinary helper spirit might have lived in a physical animal accompanying the witch. Common familiars include black cats, dogs, stags, toads, rabbits, bats, snakes, and crows, as each has strong Goddess associations. By the time of the Witch Trials, the image of the helping spirit was transformed into a demon gifted to the witch by the devil.

To modern witches, the word familiar means many things, but does not include demons or pacts with the devil. A familiar usually refers to a spirit living within a physical animal or even an object. The spirit itself may or may not be an animal spirit. It could be another type of spirit ally that blends with the consciousness of a physical animal. The spirit chooses to do this to live and work more closely with you in the physical, and then sends its awareness out with you when you journey. The process is similar to spirits residing in statues, stones, bottles, rings, or the like in ceremonial magick traditions. I honestly haven't come across too many spirits who have asked to "live" inside my pets, but I know witches who have had spirits make this request.

Many witches refer to their special pet as their familiar, particularly if they have an unusually magickal or psychic relationship with that pet. I know witches who feel their animal is a particularly evolved spirit visiting in the form of a household pet and is here to do spiritual work with them. If the pet shows up in meditations or dreams, perhaps it is an animal spirit ally or familiar.

Most witches use the word familiar instead of the terms power animal or totem animal. Familiar is one of the few surviving witchcraft terms not borrowed from another culture, so many witches prefer familiar or fetch to the more Native-sounding totem.

Your primary animal spirit guide resonates with your own nature in this lifetime. The animal's qualities are those you either embody or are learning to embody. In fact, clans, tribes, or spiritual orders dedicated to a particular animal spirit are common. Certain tribes consider themselves "bird people" or "cat people." The spirit lessons of the animal are said to embody its "medicine"

or healing quality that will bring us back into alignment with our divine nature. Shamans heal using animal spirit, bringing the client back into alignment with his own primal, natural self.

Animals resonate with the divine world. Gods and goddesses are frequently merged with animal forms, or have strong animal associations. Your primary animal spirits can give clues to the divinities most strongly associated with your spiritual path. I work closely with Spider and Crow, and two of my primary goddess patrons are the Weaver and the Irish crow goddess Macha. Each guides the path I am on, but supports me in different ways. In turn, I assist them in their work in the Middle World.

Unlike many distant gods and non-human spirits, humans can relate to the wisdom of animals because we see animals in the physical world. For those aspiring witches and shamans who don't easily resonate with the mythic stories of the gods or the realms of the elements, animal spirits become the first spirit teachers. Our fairy tales with talking animal guides are the remnants of the European shamanic wisdom.

In our global culture, animal allies can now be from any part of the world and not just the animals native to your homeland. Even "mythic" animals are alive in the spirit worlds and can be your totem. Animals like dragons, griffons, and unicorns partner with the shamanic witch. We each have a primary animal ally, in our center or heart, but as you explore the spirit worlds, you may find animals that you associate with each of the directions, creating a team of animal allies.

Animal allies make themselves known to witches, even if they are not currently practicing a shamanic path. When I began my path, I found many crow feathers. Wherever I went, I found these feathers. Crow medicine became a very important animal ally in my life. Crow medicine is about magick and sacred law. Sacred law is doing what is in alignment with the sacred world, even if it is not in harmony with humanmade rules and laws. Those lessons have been paramount in my life. I didn't originally come from a shamanic witchcraft tradition, so I didn't realize that Crow was making a spiritual contact with me. Then I found myself attracted to the Celtic crow goddesses, and called upon them during my rituals and meditations. Since learning more shamanic techniques, Crow spirit arrived to guide my journeys

and meditations.

The appearance of spider animal allies was fiercer. I had just recognized Crow as a potential ally, and began my shamanic training. For me, the shamanic training began my shadow work, and the spider spirit helped that process along. Wherever I went in the physical world, I would see spiders. They would be hanging out in my room, at friends' houses, at work, wherever I was. I hated spiders. I was bitten by one as a child, and had an allergic reaction and was rushed to the hospital. Though I liked other creepy-crawly stuff as a boy, spiders always worried me. Then in adulthood, after completing my witchcraft training, they would meticulously crawl to the ceiling above my head and drop down upon me. The first time this happened, I thought it was unusual. Then it happened repeatedly. It happened a few more times, and I got concerned. When it happened over twenty times, I got seriously freaked out. The situation got worse as time went on. The spider frights culminated with an eyes-wide-open vision of a giant spider.

While watching television, late at night, home alone, I felt a presence. Slowly it drew closer. I thought I was imagining things. Soon I saw a shadow in the hallway, like the shadow of a spider. I tried to put it out of my mind and chalked it up to being overtired and up too late. Then I had a strong flash of a giant hairy spider, six-feet long from front to back. Before I knew it, I felt like it was on top of me. With spirit vision, I "saw" the spider. I knew it wasn't physically real, but energetically it was very real. Basically the spider said to me that I needed to get over my fear of spiders, of death and pain, and ultimately of fear itself. It asked, what is the most horrible thing a spider could do to me? Bite me. And if the spider were poisonous, I could die. If I really believed in my path—I believe in a life after death, and reincarnation—it would not be the end of "me," just the end of my middle self, my ego. My spirit would continue, and that is what is important.

Once I acknowledged the spider's message, it disappeared, and no more eight-legged friends dropped in on me. But in my journeys, Spider became a new guide. The webs would help me climb the World Tree. I shapeshifted into a spider form and eventually met the archetypal spirit of all spiders, Grandmotherfather Spider. Later I met the Spider Weaver goddess.

If an animal makes its presence known to you in the waking Middle World, seek out its wisdom before it has to take more drastic action. Learn to listen to

its subtle signals before you have a more dramatic experience.

Exercise 11

Lower World Journey to Meet a Power Animal

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, cast your sacred space. Start your journey music, and assume your trance posture. Have any power objects or tools you desire at hand, and wear your blindfold.

2. Do Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts.

3. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey:

 I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

4. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

5. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World Tree. Know the World Tree.

6. State your intention:

 I ask to journey to the Lower World and meet with my power animal. So mote it be.

7. Following your intuition, go into the roots of the tree, and follow the tunnel into the Underworld. Traditionally any animal you see more than four times in a friendly manner is considered your totem. The experience may be in flashes, or you may have a direct experience with the animal, where it is completely clear that it is a power animal for you. Some people experience verbal communication with the animal spirit, while others are

taught and guided through inner experience or intuition. Let the animal ally take you on a journey.

8. When done, hearing the callback, return the way you came. Thank your animal guide, knowing it will respond to your future journeys. Come back to the base of the World Tree, and thank it for this journey. Thank the gods, spirits, and your power animal. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Do any necessary closing rituals.

Many traditions say you should not speak about your spirit allies or guides in public. It's a personal experience, so I can understand why. Revealing something about your power animal reveals something about you. Some say you will offend or lose the animal spirit if you reveal it, but I don't agree. My particular allies have told me to share their stories, because I teach through story. Other teachers feel that allies should be kept to oneself until they independently reveal themselves to another. If someone were to see my power animals, spirit guides, or patron gods around me psychically, and then mention it to me, that would be a signal that it was safe to talk about those particular beings with this person. In the end, it is a personal decision and entirely up to you and your own allies. I find sharing to be difficult but ultimately rewarding in the right circumstances. It can bring people together and help them understand each other.

Animal Relationships

Novice practitioners make initial contact with their power animal, and then do nothing to deepen the relationship. Like any relationship, time, effort, and energy must be put into this connection. Power animals are allies, partners in life, and they must be honored and respected.

Many animal spirits have specific names, while others refer to themselves simply by their species name, such as Cat or Crow. More often than not, the animal will give you its name if it desires you to know it, with unusual sounds and syllables. It's traditionally not our place to name our animal allies, unless they request we do for the sake of easy communication. Some animals ask us to choose a name or symbol that will be the common name used in the

relationship, though it is not the spirit's true name. You can pick a name you like, or generate a magickal name or sigil from a variety of ritual magick and numerological techniques available. Many magicians seek out the true name of the spirit they call upon to use it in binding seals and sigils. It is said that to have the true name of a spirit is to have absolute power over it, for a spirit name is the being's true energy, its true vibration, not just a symbolic title. In shamanic relationships, such bindings are usually not necessary when working with totemic partners.

Acknowledge your power animal. Think of it often, and thank it for guiding and protecting you. I thank all of my animal allies on an almost daily basis. I have made the Shamanic Smudging Ritual (chapter 3) a part of my daily altar devotional (*OTOW,* chapter 9). When I smudge to each direction, I associate an animal with each direction to teach me the lessons of each element and world. Primary power animals are usually in the center, in the heart. As I honor each direction, I thank the animal spirit for its blessing in my life. As you take more progressive journeys and gather more animal allies, you will determine which animal is best suited for each direction. As you develop your relationships with them, their role in your life will become clearer. They will tell you the direction from which you should honor them. The smudging ritual gets the attention of your allies and gathers them together before any journey.

Fetishes for your medicine bag or altar are important ways of connecting with the energy of your animal ally. Look for potential charms to connect you with your animal spirit. If something is not readily apparent, the act of making your own fetish is incredibly powerful. Fetishes can be simple pieces of art, like the simplistic cave drawings of the Stone Age people. You don't have to be a talented artist to make powerful magickal symbols. Take a stone or a piece of wood, cleanse it of all harmful energy, and then draw the image of the animal on it. Consecrate it in a ritual, and ask the power animal to charge the fetish with its energy. Carry it in your medicine bag or pocket, or keep it on your altar.

Animal mask-making is a beautiful art form. Making elaborate masks and costumes is not only a way of honoring and connecting with a power animal, it is also a powerful tool to be used in ritual and ceremony. When a shaman dons a magickal mask, the qualities of that animal or spirit are invoked, literally transforming the shaman from the outside in. Mask-making is a complicated,

creative project. For more practical information, I suggest the book *Sacred Mask, Sacred Dance* by Evan John Jones with Chas S. Clifton, and a trip to your local craft store.

Animal masks are also worn when animal dancing. Shamans "dance" their power animal by mimicking the animal's moves and sounds, to fully embody the medicine and lessons of the animal. How can you know what an animal is about unless you try to see things from its perspective? Animal dancing helps you get into the spiritual skin of your ally, and know it more intimately.

Some traditions have very specific steps for specific animal dances. The animal forms found in many martial arts traditions probably arose from these shamanic traditions. Though formal dances and moves are great things to learn, most modern shamans simply move intuitively, as guided by their power animal. You may feel silly at first, but the more you ritualize it and seek to embody your power animal, the more freeing and powerful the dance will become.

Modern animal dances incorporate symbolism from the animal and tools from your life. In a dance for a winged creature, you could have feathers in each hand. My favorite dance is that of snake medicine, used when you want to shed your old skin and transform yourself. Snake medicine is about embodying something new and letting go of the old. Start by wearing some old clothes, things that you never want to wear again and that symbolize the "old" you. Ritually shed your clothes while imagining yourself as a snake. When done, dispose of your old clothes. Traditionally you should burn them, but burying them or simply throwing them away works, too.

Shapeshifting

The rites of animal masks and dance are deeply connected to the experience of shapeshifting. Shapeshifting occurs when the shaman loses his own shape and individual identity to take on the shape of an animal. Though this definition confuses many because they think the transformation occurs on the physical level, the true transformation happens between worlds, to the spiritual bodies, not to the physical flesh and blood.

Though the ritual performed when wearing an animal mask or doing an animal dance can facilitate shapeshifting, the transformation usually occurs

spontaneously in a shamanic journey. Students have reported to me that during a journey they merged with their power animal, becoming one, or they mimicked their power animal's shape, to keep up with it. They didn't consciously intend it beforehand. The transformation came naturally.

In this new form, they moved differently, saw things in a new way, and felt a shift in their body, thoughts, and emotions. Their spirit bodies assumed not only the shape but also the energetic pattern of the animal, conferring these new blessings. They felt their flesh taking on feathers, fur, or fangs. They received the animal's talents and qualities. In essence, they embodied its medicine.

One student, Olivette, vividly described a meditation prior to any shamanic training where, as she drummed for herself, just to meditate, she felt her body morph into a falcon, an animal she had always loved. She described the feeling of her flesh and bones shifting into the structure of wings while simultaneously being aware that her arms were still drumming.

We can become so immersed in the instincts of our animal persona during a shapeshifting experience that we find ourselves doing things we normally would not do, at least from a human perspective. My friend Leandra, when undergoing shapeshifting into her totem animal snake form, found herself devouring a mouse before she realized what was happening. On a personal level, she had great difficulty with the very visceral experience, though part of animal medicine is to learn that such actions on the part of the snake are strictly instinctual, a matter of survival, and not personal or human. They are ways to understand the circles of life, death, and rebirth, divorced from our human sensibilities.

Shapeshifting is different from pretending to be the animal, although imagination starts the experience. Many practitioners comment on what they thought the experience would be like versus the actual experience. My student Claire thought that shapeshifting into a bear would feel lumbering, but when she did, she felt quite comfortable and powerful. Before the journey she gave no thought to the sense of territory a bear would have, but was keenly aware of it when she experienced her journey through a bear's perspective.

Merging with your totem, rather than shifting your own shape, is another powerful experience. Merging grants many of the same experiences as shapeshifting, but offers a few more. Both help you build a relationship with your totem animal. Both help you get in touch with your animal nature. Merging,

however, has the added benefit of helping your totem animal understand a more human perspective. It increases your ability to communicate with your totem, and even enhances your communication skills with physical animals.

The ability to shift shape can be a test. To enter a special place in the other world, you must change shape to move past barriers. Sometimes a shaman will undergo a series of metamorphoses, several animal shapes in rapid succession, as a test of wits and adaptability. If you can shapeshift into the appropriate form for the place, it indicates you are ready to continue the journey and are prepared for whatever you will encounter there.

Try this shapeshifting journey if you have already established a link to a power animal. If not, wait until you make a connection to an animal spirit before attempting the exercise.

Exercise 12

Shapeshifting Journey

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, cast your sacred space. Start your journey music, and assume your trance posture. Have any power objects or tools you desire at hand, and wear your blindfold.

2. Do Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts.

3. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey:

 I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

4. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

5. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World

Tree. Know the World Tree.

6. State your intention:

I ask to journey with my power animal and experience shapeshifting in a manner that is correct and good for me, harming none. So mote it be.

7. Call to your power animal. Feel the animal meet you at the base of the World Tree to guide you, or feel its presence call you into the other worlds.

8. Let the animal ally take you on a journey and guide your experience. Through its urging, you will feel your awareness shift shape and become something else. Usually your first shapeshifting transformation involves mimicking the shape of your primary animal ally, but you might be guided to take the shape of another animal. As always, follow your intuition.

9. When done, hearing the callback, return to your original shape. Remember what it feels like to be human. Remember your identity, and feel yourself flow into your natural shape. Return the way you came into the other worlds. Your animal guide may guide you back out, or simply point the way. Thank your animal guide, knowing it will respond to your future journeys. Go back to the base of the World Tree, and thank it for this journey. Thank the gods, spirits, and your power animal. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Do any necessary closing rituals.

Shamanic animal shapeshifting is not the only form of shapeshifting. Celtic shamans are known to take the shape of many things, from natural phenomena like floods, clouds, and rays of light to the roar of the ocean, the sound of the wind, and the point on a spear. These transformations demonstrate their connection to all of nature. Look at the “Song of Amergin” at the very beginning of this book. It is one variation of many translations listing the shapes Amergin can assume. The seeds of advanced shapeshifting and merging are found in earlier exercises from *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft,* including Exercise 13: Mental Projection and its “cloud busting” variation. We learn to mimic and merge with the spirits of the natural world to make our magick. This is one of the secrets of shamanic weather magick.

The Faery Realm

What is the faery realm? Who are the faeries? Just as when you ask, “What is a witch?” you will get many different answers to this question. The faery folk cause much controversy since the term has come to apply to a wide range of beings. Everybody might be right in their own way, but everybody isn’t talking about the same thing. The recent popularity of faeries has caused a lot of confusion.

Traditionally the faery folk, also known as the fey, fey folk, fair folk, gentry, kind ones, and good people, are a race of beings with a strong history in European lore, particularly Celtic. They are equated with the elves, dwarves, brownies, sprites, pookas, pixies, leprechauns, and nymphs of folklore. Though they appear in myths around the world, and are described in many different ways, their best-known myths come from the traditions where witchcraft was practiced. Witches are known to ally with faeries, so when witches were maligned in a particular society, so were the faery folk.

The term faery can be traced to the English *fee,* from the Greek *fatua* and Roman *fata,* meaning “fate.” Perhaps the faeries are beyond mortal fate, or play a hand in our fate. Many witches use the spelling *faery* rather than *fairy* to distinguish the true mythic beings and spiritual energies from modern pop-culture images. The archaic meaning of the word fay or fey refers to being enchanted or bewitched, while a state of enchantment is called faerie. Modern practitioners use the terms interchangeably now for both the race of beings of the faery realms and the feeling of enchantment when the human and faery realms cross paths.

Our modern image of a faery is the tiny, winged creature that flitters around sprinkling stardust and moonbeams. Though this is one definition, it is not the only one. “Serious” students of faery lore think our modern “Tinkerbell” image of faeries comes strictly from the Victorian era, not any true pagan faery lore. That image was popularized during the time of the Victorians, but tales preceding that era describe the fair folk as being of normal or even gigantic stature. Evidence of the tiny, winged image does predate the Victorians, however, and can be found in ancient Mediterranean art associated with tombs. Some feel the faeries are the souls of the departed, or perhaps the soul’s guide to the next world.

In modern New Age practice, the faeries are described as devas, nature spirits, and elementals. Though they have much in common with the faery folk, those names describe three different orders of beings. In the context of nature, devas are the architects and overseers of nature, working from the Upper World. Nature spirits refer to the animating, building force of the various aspects of nature. The deva of dandelions holds the blueprint, the aura, and genetic code patterns of the dandelion, but the nature spirit of that particular dandelion creates its roots, leaves, and flower. Nature spirits exist in the Middle World, and I think of them as the middle selves of nature.

Elementals are often confused with nature spirits, but elementals are beings who embody one of the four classic elemental energies, and are called upon in ritual from the four directions. They embody a single element at one time—fire, earth, air, or water. In many traditions, the form an earth elemental takes is called a gnome, and is thought of as a faerylike being in shape. An air elemental takes the form of a sylph, a winged humanoid akin to our modern image of faeries, increasing the confusion.

Most traditional myths refer to something else when they speak of the faery realm. The inhabitants are linked closely with the elements, nature, and devas, but appear to be independent of them. Faeries are associated with the land below through ancestor reverence. To the Christian church, the faeries are the souls of the pagan dead who did not convert to Christianity, and are forever doomed to walk between worlds in limbo without the presence of heaven.

In many Celtic traditions the fair folk are linked with the race of gods who walked the land of Ireland, known as the Tuatha de Danaan. This tribe came to the British Isles from their mystical lands in the four corners and conquered the Fomorians. Later the Celtic people themselves migrated to the isles, and the Tuatha vanished beneath the hills and forest into the lower worlds. They were first honored as gods, but their status was eventually reduced in the world of mortals. Perhaps their diminished size is symbolic of our perceptions of old ones—as they became less known and less involved in our lives, their stature became smaller and smaller. Those Celtic spirits living under the hills became known as the Sidhe (pronounced “She”) and became a part of our folk tales and legends. The Sidhe are considered a powerful race of faery.

Norse traditions have two distinct races and two distinct worlds associated with the fair folk. The Upper World contains the light and fair elves, the helpful

spirits who live in Alfheim. They have associations with noble ancestors. The word elf is rooted in Old German and means “white being” or “bright being,” referring to one from another world. Below is the realm of the dark elves or dwarves. They live in the land known as Svartalfheim. Though many can be helpful, we associate the more mischievous and malicious elves with this realm.

In interpretations of Judeo-Christian mystical texts, the faeries are a race of “fallen” angels, neither evil nor good. Truly their fall represents their descent into matter, into the land, not into sin. They are the mirror image of the angelic hosts, governing aspects of nature’s development while the angels govern and guard the more human intellectual realms. Faeries are male and female, like much of nature, not genderless as the heavenly angels reportedly are. They have more of an “ego” or investment in the world because they are merged with the physical, with the land and the dense Underworld. They are not above it all and remote, like the angelic realm. They are the light within the land.

More pragmatic and nonmystically aligned faery theorists believe the faery legends are based on a diminutive race of people, such as the Picts of the British Isles. With the Celtic invasion, these people fled to the wilds and became the beings of folklore. Though an interesting theory, to the modern shamanic witch it doesn’t account for the very real spiritual contact practitioners across the world receive from the faery realm.

Those humans whose spirit path is through nature learn to contact and partner with the fey just as other mages learn to call upon angels. Many theorize that the faery folk, and even most of the Upper World spirits, are not complete. Their consciousness is not composed of all the elements and planes. This state of being has its advantages—and its drawbacks. Faeries partner with humanity to expand their awareness of all the elements and all planes of existence, as humans act as bridges for them to touch all worlds. That is their motivation for connecting with the Middle World.

My own personal theory, based on my experiences and what my faery allies have told me, is that the faery folk are Lower World beings in partnership with creation. They reside in the Underworld. If all things have their parallels in the three worlds, faeries act as the lower selves of nature, while nature spirits and elementals reside in the Middle World. Devas are much like the higher selves of nature, residing closest to the angels. Through a balance of all three, nature

continues and thrives. Humanity is capable of being conscious in all three realms of creation, and must act as stewards and guardians of this balance, building partnerships with the faeries, nature spirits, and devas. Witches in particular are charged with this stewardship. Some myths say we share ancestral blood with the fey.

Through the surviving mythology and modern contact, we know many things about the faery realm. Faery lands seem to be intimately connected to the land under which they reside. Though not literally beneath the earth but in the spirit lands of the Underworld, the geography of where you meet these beings seems to influence the experience you have. The faeries of North America are somewhat different from the faeries of the British Isles. Faeries on the east coast of the United States are different from those on the northwest coast. They all have similarities, but differences too. When comparing faery contacts in different countries, one might assume that the different cultures act as a lens for faery contact, as each culture will see these beings from their own cultural perspective. Yet faery scholars talk about how the faery myths and descriptions remain constant in a geographic area regardless of the cultures that settle in that area, giving us the belief that it is the land itself, the geographic region and not the human culture, that shapes our faery experiences.

Some faery allies are capable of crossing bodies of water to continue a journey with you as you travel the Middle World. Many people believe that some of the faeries and spirits of each culture travel with the people of that culture as they migrate, so some of the faeries from Europe have migrated with their people to the United States. Others remain in one spot, so you must be in proximity to them. They are bound to the material world as well as the Underworld, and seem to have territories, just like the physical nations of the Middle World.

Time is distorted in the faery realms. That is true in most shamanic journeys, but legends of crossing into the faery realm contain many twists. For instance, one night on earth is seven years with the fey. Likewise, several years can pass on earth, but last only one night in the faery realm. Similarly, the realm of the fey seems to be at the opposite end of the Wheel of the Year. Enter from the earthly winter, and you will find yourself in the fey summer.

Many gateways to the faery realm exist, and you might pass through them

and not even know. Usually there is a threshold, a boundary of some kind. Some are as subtle as a hedge, while other legends describe rivers of blood. The most popular gateways are through the openings in trees and wells, or under hills, mounds, and the tombs of your ancestors. According to the lore, you should put an iron nail in the doorway to the faery realm so they cannot close it before you leave. Traditionally faeries abhor iron, as iron is used to disrupt spirits. Iron is used in protection spells to ground unwanted energy. Mages use an iron sword to command and banish summoned spirits.

The fair folk come into the middle realm regularly. They celebrate, doing their work to keep nature flowing. They meet with humans in ritual, meditation, and dreams. Faery rings, rings of mushrooms or darkened grass, denote their gathering space, and possible gateways to their realm. Faeries are known to give many blessings, grant good harvest, heal the sick, and bring fertility when treated well. The idea of knocking on wood not to hex your good fortune is to thank the faeries that reside in the wood for their blessing. Accepting faery food and drink, when offered to you, is a risky proposition. Most stories warn not to consume such offerings, saying they will trap you in the faery realm forever or transform you in some malicious way. But some have found that these offerings are blessings and initiations, and such warnings are Christian propaganda to prevent personal empowerment and insight. Others say their gifts of gold turn to dross in the daylight. Perhaps the gifts they are giving are not material, and those who see only riches miss the point of the gift, and lose it entirely. I suggest you listen closely to your intuition and the guidance of your nonfaery allies in these matters, and err on the side of caution. Respect the old traditions when unsure, and decline. And when you decline faery food and gift, do so politely.

Faeries are not all sweetness and light. Although they are good-natured in general, like humans they have a good side and a bad side. When treated with reverence and respect, they respond in kind. They can be very generous friends and allies. When treated poorly, they also respond in kind. Many legends refer to them by very polite names, such as the “good people” or “kind ones,” making sure to show respect and not anger them. To refer to them directly might show disrespect.

The benefits of a faery ally are tremendous. Faeries help with healing work

and seership. They aid in divination, psychic development, and all forms of magick. Faeries can teach us more about shapeshifting, how to use shapeshifting skills to alter our appearance through a type of magick called a glamour, and the mysteries of herbal magick and healing. Certain fey folk inspire music, art, poetry, and other writing. They will teach you about the other worlds, and some will even choose to walk with you in the Middle World, to learn more about our realm as we learn about theirs. They can act as fierce protectors and wise counsel. There is no limit to the gifts of the fey.

Exercise 13

Faery Contact

If you want to work with the fey beneath your own land, leave out offerings for them. Traditionally milk, honey, bread, butter, cheese, and grain are all popular. In the modern world, anything that you value and that has sweetness to it can be an offering. Some leave out traditional meals, chocolate, candy, cookies, cake, nuts, seeds, and even ice cream. Just as those in the traditional African religions had to adapt their offerings to the loa spirits, using carmel, liquor, cigars, and beads, so too do modern pagans adapt their offerings to the fey folk. In some ways, the two—the loa and faeries—are similar. They both play an intermediary role between humanity and the higher powers. They both are associated with the ancestors. They have an almost angelic quality, yet are tied to the material world and accept material offerings. The practitioners of both cultures kept the traditions alive despite persecution from Christianity.

When leaving a faery offering, the physical food may be eaten by animals in your area, but the energy and intention will build a bridge between you and the fey of your land. Offerings are like a beacon to attract the attention of these spirits. Offerings are the preferred method to start with before journeying to the faery realm. Once you have earned the good will of the fey, you can move more easily in the faery realm and learn how it affects you.

Leave out your faery offerings on the nights of the full moon, new moon, sabbats, and any other time you feel is appropriate. You can make a small outdoor shrine, or if necessary, an indoor one instead. It doesn't have to be fancy. I have a flat stone in my garden that I use as an offering plate. If you live some place where you can't do anything outside, adapt the best you can.

Leave your offering on a windowsill, fire escape, rooftop, or small corner of your living room. Then take the food some place where it will return to the earth. Meditate as you offer the food. Invite in only the faery folk who come in "Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, for the highest good." State your intention to know them, to partner with them, and ask for their blessing. Trust your intuitive impressions.

To deepen your connection to the realm, learn the myths of the faeries. Learn the old stories, fairy tales, and the methods of modern pagan practitioners who delve into the faery realm. Like the gods, the more you know about a spiritual being and the more respect you pay it, the more likely it will respond to your call.

Once you feel you have established some energetic link, you can try to journey to the realm of the faeries and meet with your potential allies directly. This should not be rushed. Take time to build the relationship first.

Realize that if you start this process and get bored with it, the faeries might get used to these gifts and not take kindly to the sudden stop. I tend to do fewer faery offerings in the wintertime and more in the summer, which seems to be the natural cycle to my land and faery folk. If I were to stop suddenly, I think they would be offended. Build a relationship with them, and if you have to change your practice or are moving, explain it to the fair folk.

Keep in mind that these concepts of the fey are an amalgam of several different world traditions. If they vary from your beliefs, terms, definitions, or experiences, keep an open mind and work with the ideas that work best for you. I don't share the darker aspects of faeries to frighten you from working with them, but simply to inform you of traditional lore so you can make a wise choice in your own spiritual work. I have found through my work that if you enter with true love, an open mind, and respect, you will be guided and protected in your faery experience.

Offerings to the Underworld

When working with the Lower World, we learn to work with our denser energy. Our dense energy inhibits us in the Middle World, holding us back and leaving us stuck or feeling depressed. This dense energy is the accumulated fears, anger, and traumas of our life, along with the day-to-day psychic garbage that

we all experience. We work with the Underworld to transmute these energies that naturally resonate with the Underworld. The following technique can help you much like Exercise 3: Emotional Body Training (chapter 4), but it helps not just with intense emotions, but also with the heavy, indefinable energies that linger over time.

When you carry too much dense energy, you can make an offering to the Underworld. We think of it as "earthing" the energy, since the earth will absorb energy, break it down, and recycle it, much like taking dead leaves or dead bodies. The energy of decay, breaking things down, is a function of the Lower World, the realm of the dead. It bubbles up as fresh energy into the earth of the Middle World, like fertile soil from rotting leaves. The cycle of transformation is essential to the balance between the worlds. When you heal and release, you add to the balancing cycle of the universe.

Exercise 14

Underworld Offering

There are three main ways to release your heavy, dense energy to the Underworld. The first is simply through intent, much like grounding or earthing the energy after a ritual. You can do this by making contact with the ground itself, by kneeling on the ground and pressing your hands into it. You could also funnel the energy into the ground through a staff or sword, or simply will it there through your raised hands in a standing position (*OTOW,* chapter 11). You can do the tree breathing meditation (Exercise 6) and focus exclusively on the roots. As you ground your energy, simply use your will, and intend to release all heavy energy through your roots into the earth and then the Underworld.

The second method is to do a shamanic journey with your power animal, with the intention of releasing unwanted heavy energy. Let your animal guide bring you to a spot in the Underworld where you can release. Imagine releasing any heavy, dense, stuck, thick energy into this place. Imagine it being absorbed by the land of the Underworld, to be transformed.

The third technique is to create a heavy energy eater. For this magickal device, you will need a stone of considerable size. Mine is a very large quartz-crystal point, the size of a newborn child. It doesn't have to be that big, or

made of quartz, but it should be a fairly large, dense stone. It's not something you will carry around with you. Cleanse the stone like any ritual object (*OTOW,* exercise 27). Then do a journey to the Underworld with your power animal while holding the stone or lying next to it. Imagine a spirit double of the stone psychically with you on the journey. Link the image of the stone with a place in the Underworld into which it is appropriate to release dense energy by visualizing an energy cord. It can be any color you desire. Return to the Middle World, and consecrate the stone as a heavy energy eater. Imagine merging the spirit form of the stone with the physical stone. Say this or something similar:

> *I charge this stone to absorb all harmful, unwanted dense energy from its environment and ground it into the Underworld to be transformed. I charge this link is one-way only, down to the Underworld, absorbing only harmful, unwanted energies. So mote it be.*

Now the stone will absorb unwanted energies from the environment. If you hold it and specifically intend to release dense energy into it, it will be a powerful healing tool for you. The stone should be cleansed and reconsecrated occasionally, depending on how frequently you use it. I keep mine in my office, so it is exposed to a lot of dense energy through my healing work. I try to cleanse and reconsecrate it at least once every three months.

Choose one of these three techniques, and perform it. Notice how you feel afterward. Do you feel lighter, more at peace? Do you feel uneasy that you let go of something you identified with? Notice how your experiences with this exercise change as you do it more frequently.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 11–14 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.
- Research your power animal. Learn about its animal medicine. Use both New Age animal-medicine books and traditional research on the animal's biology, habitat, and culture. Such information can usually be found in an encyclopedia. Think symbolically about how the animal's actions affect your life. Research if there are any gods or goddesses associated with your animal. Do you have an affinity for those deities? Also look ahead to

chapter 12 for specific animal-medicine information.

Continuing Assignments

- Keep a traditional journal of your magickal experiences and those in your day-to-day life.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Practice the Second Attention exercises outlined in chapter 2.
- Continue to build your shamanic tools and witch bag.
- Be mindful of the Earth Mother and your relationship with her.
- Be mindful of dense and refined energies in your environment.
- Continue to work with sacred spaces in the middle worlds.

Tips

- Once you make a connection to your animal guide, and find/make a fetish for your witch bag, use ritual and meditation to empower the fetish as a magickal connection. If you are uncertain as to how to empower it, journey with your animal guide and ask it. Continue this empowering process with any tools that are linked to your spirit allies.
- Be aware of all of the animals in your life, and in particular those that cross your path. They might have a subtle message for you. If you see your particular power animal, it is even more important. It could be just a reassuring presence, or a message to pay attention to that animal medicine in your meditations and daily life.
- Treat each animal like another sovereign being. Greet the birds, cats, dogs, and squirrels in your daily life like they are neighbors.
- Although unusual, your initial totemic guide may not be an animal spirit, but a plant spirit. More on plant spirits can be found in chapter 13.
- Realize if you work with an animal spirit as a physical familiar, as in a relationship with a household pet, that in the act of protecting us, our animal spirits shield us from psychic harm, taking on the harm themselves. Sometimes this can manifest as illness or an accident in working with a physical animal. Do protection and healing rituals with your special, magickal pets.

- Try using your shapeshifting skills to experiment with glamours. Glamours are a form of shapeshifting magick where you shift your personal appearance. You don't shift into an animal form—you remain human. Most people use glamour magick to create an idealized self-image to project to others, perhaps to appear more physically beautiful to others. Glamours can also be used to camouflage yourself, almost becoming invisible because few will notice you. You can also use them to appear more frightening or intense when you need to project that image. You don't actually change your literal physical appearance, but rather the way people perceive you. Experiment with glamours. A well-versed witch is said to be able to cast a glamour not only on herself, but on others as well.
- Be aware of the faery folk, and if you so choose, build your relationship with them based on mutual respect. Don't feel that you have to make contact with them if you are not drawn to do so.

Recommended Resources

- *Animal-Wise* by Ted Andrews.
- *Animal-Speak* by Ted Andrews.
- *Medicine Cards: The Discovery of Power Through the Ways of Animals* by Jamie Sams & David Carson. Illustrated by Angela C. Werneke.
- *The Celtic Animal Oracle* by Anna Franklin. Illustrated by Paul Mason.

Recommended Reading

- *The Once Unknown Familiar* by Timothy Roderick.
- *The Witch's Familiar* by Raven Grimassi.
- *The Living World of Faery* by R. J. Stewart.
- *The Faerie Way* by Hugh Mynne.
- *The Faery Teachings* by Orion Foxwood.

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8

Lesson Four
The Starry Road

As walkers between the worlds, we walk not only the paths below to the Underworld, but also the paths above, to the heavenly realms inhabited by bright and shining beings. Just as many people on a shamanic path try to avoid the dark realms of the Underworld, some witches try to avoid anything reminiscent of the Christian heaven, such as the Upper World. I know I did, at least when I first started on the path of the shamanic witch. Such a division cuts us off from one-third of creation and a necessary aspect of our spiritual development. We must learn both how to go deeply and how to rise high.

The Upper World

The upper worlds are known by many names—the Overworld, the realms of light, the starry kingdoms, the sky kingdoms, the ascended worlds, the upper astral, the mental or spiritual plane, the plane of enlightenment, and, by most peoples, heaven. The more pagan concepts of the Upper World were blended with Christian ideas of heaven, and in fact the concept of Christian heaven is not far from the concept of the upper worlds. They share a lot of traits. The misconception is the absolute polarity of the upper and lower worlds in Christian cosmology. By this reasoning, if the Underworld, what Christians would call hell, is a place of absolute evil, punishment, and torture, then heaven is a place of absolute good and the ultimate reward.

By exploring the Underworld already, you have learned there are many aspects to it, and though it is a challenging world, it is also a place of healing and help. There is nothing absolute about it. Likewise, the Upper World has its own qualities and characteristics. It's not all ease and pleasure. The Upper World contains its own challenges and difficulties.

As the Lower World is the foundation for the Middle World, the foundation for physical reality, the Upper World is what feeds the Lower World. We

described the Lower World as the rich soil from which our known reality grows. With that image in mind, the Upper World is the realm that provides the rainwater, wind, and light that keeps the process of growth going.

If the Lower World is where things take shape and form before manifesting, the Upper World is the realm of ideas. The Upper World contains the spark of life, like the fire of the sun and the stars shining down on the world. With that spark of creation, with that light of life, a concept of what is to be created will form. That is the pattern of creation. It is the spiritual blueprint, the spiritual DNA. Like all ideas, it has a very mental quality to it. That pattern is like a seed and is carried by the spiritual winds and planted in the soil of the Underworld, where it takes shape and form. As the light of the sun is the source of life on earth, warming the land, activating seeds, and being stored in plants as energy, which is in turn eaten by animals and humans, the Upper World is the source of spiritual life and creation. In fact, some traditions use the image of the upside-down tree. Hindu and ceremonial magick traditions use an image of the tree rooted in heaven, with the fruit being the material world.

As the Underworld resonates most closely with the feminine elements of water and earth, the Upper World resonates with the masculine elements of fire and air. Because of this, many explorers describe the Upper World as more direct. Experiences there are less symbolic and surreal than they are in the Underworld. They do not have to be decoded or deeply pondered. The Upper World gives us direct messages.

Upper World journeys, and the spirits encountered there, seem impersonal. They are very loving yet detached, where by contrast the Lower World beings can be very affectionate when they take a liking to you, and stern or volatile if they do not. Upper World messages are frequently information-based, and some messages have no personal significance at all. You might be bringing information back for another, or simply be receiving a mystical technique or a bit of esoteric history.

We visit the Upper World to detach from a situation and see it from above, with a clearer perspective. The advice given by the Upper World beings is direct, specific, and usually not cushioned to shield your feelings. What is, is. It's that easy. Only ask the questions for which you truly wish to know the answers. The Upper World helps us detach from our ego, from our fears and

desires, and see what the true pattern is. Here we can discern true will, as the Upper World relates to our upper, or higher, self. We can only get to the heart of the Upper World by exploring and clearing aspects of our shadow self. Most beginning shamanic witches, when not given instruction to journey above or below, or even a real explanation of the two realms, will usually journey to the Underworld first. There is a magnetic pull to experience the mysteries below before you can appreciate the knowledge from above.

While the Underworld has a certain gloom or haze to it, the Upper World is a place of continual light. The source of light is the sun, stars, and planets. The light can range from extremely healing and purifying to bordering on painful. Some Upper World spirits will only appear as swirling balls of light, without any material shape or form.

The landscape varies among traditions and cultures, but descriptions include lands in the hills and mountains, cloudy realms, and floating islands. Our myths regarding hidden kingdoms in the cloudy heavens find their basis in Upper World journeys. Many shamanic practitioners find an earthly paradise of eternal summer in the Upper World. They find the idea of perfection, the perfection of the material world, including verdant grass, crystal-clear blue skies, lush forests, gentle animals, and abundant food.

Though the heavenly realms are different in the stories of different cultures and shamans, common themes reveal themselves to students of world wisdom. Here are some common cross-cultural images to be explored in the Upper World.

Animal Spirits

Though most of the flying animal spirits are strongly associated with the Upper World, you can find a variety of animal spirits in this realm, not just winged creatures, though animals associated with the sky are most common. There is land and water to be found in visions of the Upper World, not just sky. These animals will have a different nature than the animal spirits of the lower realms, being generally more peaceful and contemplative. Sometimes you will have a primary totem for Underworld journeys and a different totem for Upper World journeys.

Angels

Upper World spirits of creation, stewardship, and protection are found in world

mythology, and most easily resonate with our concept of angelic spirits. Different traditions of angels divide them into different orders or choirs, but they all have an Upper World association.

Cities, Castles, and Palaces

Upper World cities of glass, crystal, amber, and gold are populated with enlightened spirits who are free of the wheel of karma. In their libraries and temples are vast amounts of mystical knowledge. The deities of the Upper World are housed in amazing castles, towers, and palaces of light, crystal, and precious metals. Many are crafted from the light of the stars and the sky, much like the realm of Arianrhod, the goddess of the silver wheel. Caer Arianrhod, her heavenly castle, is a magickal place to experience when you have this goddess' blessing. Such locations serve as temples where we can interact with the divine ones on a personal level, and experience healing, insight, and transformation.

Devas

The word deva comes from the Hindu traditions, and though it generally refers to a "god" or "little god," it has become popularly known as the overarching spirit of a particular facet of nature. Each type of plant has its deva. There is a deva for dandelions, and a deva for oak trees. Each stone and mineral has its own ruling deva. An area of land has its overarching, or overlighting, as it's sometimes known, deva. There is a deva for your local public park, and even a deva for your garden. Devas were described to me as the intelligence animating an aspect of nature. They are like the architects of nature. They hold the mental geometric structures of the aspects they govern. Psychics and witches contact these beings to give them information on the plant or land they govern. Devas are the higher selves of nature.

Elixir of the Gods

Another worldwide Upper World image is of an intoxicating divine beverage found in the heavens. As the Underworld has its rivers, cauldrons, and cups of magick, the Upper World has this elixir. Called ambrosia by the Greeks and soma by the Hindus, it can grant life, wisdom, insight, and divine vision. It's Odin's mead of inspiration. Most likely it is a corollary of the shamans' psychedelic potions used to induce visions. Though in myth it is jealously

guarded by the gods, many shamans who prove themselves worthy of a boon report being offered a sip of this liquid while visiting the gods, and being granted new insight and ideas.

Immortal Fruit

Growing in the heavenly world is a special fruit. When one eats of this fruit, immortality is the gift, though other legends say it grants wisdom or healing. Many think of the fruit as the source of the God's power. Legends of golden apples are common in mythology. Perhaps this is also where the biblical story of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life comes. This immortal fruit could be the basis of the magickal elixir of the gods, the source of ambrosia. Like the elixir, some journeyers will be granted a taste of the fruit and its gifts when found worthy by the gods.

Majestic Bird

A majestic bird, such as an eagle, falcon, or condor, resides in the highest branches of the World Tree. Such birds are the symbols of the shaman, and represent the link between the physical and highest realms. This bird spirit can literally act as an intermediary between the worlds. Upper World deities shapeshift into birds to interact with those on the mortal plane. Zeus, the patriarch of the Greek Olympians, would transform into an eagle on his adventures with mortals. As the god of thunder and lightning, the majestic bird is also associated with storms and lightning, to get his messages across to humanity. The bird is associated with the Goddess, as many images of the Crone goddess, with hooked nose, relate to the beak of a bird. As the animal form of the Goddess, the majestic bird is alternately guardian and destroyer, depending on which aspect is needed to bring balance. This bird is also symbolic of the higher self.

Upper World Gods

The lords and ladies of the Upper World are the higher reflections of their Lower and Middle World counterparts. These beings are usually sky and celestial beings, watching from above to give guidance and advice. Any of the deities associated with the heavens, sky, storms, lightning, sun, moon, stars, knowledge, magick, and mountaintops are part of this realm.

Throne

In the various castles and cities in the sky, journeyers are bidden to sit on a particular throne or in a special chamber. The seat acts like a conduit and magnifying glass, attuning anyone who sits in it to a particular energy or vision. The thrones are ways of attuning your higher energy bodies to specific energies, just as the cauldrons of the Underworld are used to heal your lower, intuitive bodies. Some journeyers do find thrones in the Lower World as well.

Winged Chariot

The chariots of the gods are found in such diverse sources as Greek, Norse, and even Biblical myths. These heavenly chariots are responsible for the movement of celestial bodies over the heavens. The sun god pulls the chariot of the sun across the sky, and the moon goddess does the same with the chariot of the moon. The animals of the chariot are magickal beasts, winged horses, lions, cats, or dragons. Here we have the first images that would later become the Chariot card of the tarot. A shamanic explorer will sometimes have her own mythic chariot for otherworldly journeys, or be invited to board and ride a chariot of a god for a short time.

Greek	Olympus
Egyptian	Heliopolis
Celtic	Ceugant, Gwynvyd, Avalon
Norse	Asgard, Alfheim, Valhalla
Slavic	Irij
Andean	Hanaq Pacha
Mayan	Thirteen Heavens

Figure 24: *Upper World Names*

Upper World Guides

As the qualities of the Upper World differ from those of the lower realms, the gods and guides of this realm echo those differences. The spirits that populate the upper worlds are focused more in the realms of air and fire, mind and energy. They can appear detached, calm, and what some would call enlightened. That's not to say that all the deities and spirits here are peaceful and serene. Many of the most powerful kings and queens of the upper realm are strong, stern, and energized. They are powerful yet detached from the day-to-day affairs of humanity. They have their own concerns. But the general

spirits of the cities of light are considered to be on a different level of awareness than those in the lower realms.

Spirits residing in the Upper World are beyond the cycle of death and rebirth. While the ancestors in the Lower World are still in the cycle of rebirth, those humans who have been liberated from the wheel of rebirth, having learned all they need to know in the material plane, reside in the Upper World as the enlightened ancestors. Some traditions call them ascended masters, saints, or demigods. Pagan myths are filled with mortals who cross a line and are raised to god or near-god status. The gods themselves are famous for lifting heroes into the stars as the constellations. These are allegories for those who have transcended the wheel of rebirth, or have simply chosen to no longer participate, and reside above. Many of these spirits continue in their individual existence as spirit guides. Perhaps part of their next great cycle requires this mentorship, or they simply do it out of love and compassion for those in the struggles of the middle plane. These spirits are said to have merged with their higher self on such a level that they are no longer drawn down to the realms below unless they so choose. Most manifest only in a spiritual state, through inner vision and inner voice, rather than physically incarnating again. In that state, they can aid many people simultaneously, being beyond space and time.

Though spirit guides can come from any realm, those in the lower realm are far more concerned with your physical and emotional health, while those in the upper realm focus far more on your spiritual development. When you ask a question of a spirit in the Upper World, there is usually no riddle or symbol to solve. You get the answer to your question, though it may not be what you want to hear. Information is the key. Many of these spirits steward information that is to be shared with the world. Modern channelers who gain information on a vast array of topics, from crystals and herbs to sacred geometry, are tapping into the consciousness of the Upper World.

Cultural heroes and icons of a tradition usually reside in the Upper World. They act as guides on the path, and help point the way. Many have become recorded as gods in our myths. Some are like avatars for the gods themselves when they walked the Middle World. Though avatar is an Eastern term, the concept can be applied to Western myth. An avatar is a divine earthly embodiment of a god. Krishna is an avatar of the god Shiva, who had many avatars in the earthly plane. Though most Christians would disagree, one could

argue that Jesus, if he truly existed in flesh and blood, was an avatar for the sacrificed god. In Celtic traditions, Cuchulain was said to be an aspect and embodiment of the god Lugh.

These divine beings hold the patterns to fulfillment and enlightenment. Like the Upper World itself, they seed their patterns, through their stories and guidance, into the lower worlds to manifest. We attune ourselves to their patterns, and find patron guides and deities whose path, whose energy, resonates most closely with our own. They become not only our companions and guides, but also spiritual masters and teachers to those of us following their patterns. They provide invaluable steppingstones along the path.

Exercise 15

Upper World Journey

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, cast your sacred space. Start your journey music, and assume your trance posture. Have any power objects or tools you desire at hand, and wear your blindfold.

2. Do Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts.

3. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey:

 I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

4. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

5. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World Tree. Know the World Tree.

6. State your intention:

 I ask to journey to the Upper World, to experience its energy and meet with any spirits appropriate for me. I call upon my animal totem to guide me. So mote it be.

7. Follow your intuition and ascend the tree. You could enter the roots and find inner tunnels spiraling upward. You could climb the outside of the tree. Your power animal could carry you. Shapeshifting to a flying or climbing animal is also possible. When you reach the Upper World, you will come out into the lands above. Follow your first experience and intuition. The path may be obvious to you or hidden. Let your animal totem guide you. Treat the places and people you meet with great respect. You are a guest in these lands and should behave accordingly. Follow the journey, and see where it leads.

8. When done, hearing the callback, return the way you came. Thank your animal guide, knowing it will respond to your future journeys. Come back to the base of the World Tree, and thank it for this journey. Thank the gods, spirits, and your power animal. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Do any necessary closing rituals.

The Angelic Realm

At first glance, angels seem to be the territory of ceremonial magicians, Christians, Jews, and Moslems, not shamans and witches. Our formal angelic lore comes from these traditions, including the various classifications, orders, and choirs of angels, but tribal people have had many experiences with those that we would consider angels. Tales of sky heroes and messenger spirits bridging the gap between the worlds seem very reminiscent of modern angelic lore. Concepts such as the Hindu devas and Tibetan dakini resonate strongly with the angelic realm. My first experience in witchcraft was attending a circle where the four archangels of the directions were called upon for protection, as the lords of the watchtowers. Angels know no cultural or religious boundaries. They are universal, and their aid is available to everyone.

The depictions of heavenly creatures with wings in myths and artwork across

the world are references to the angelic beings. Carvings and statues from the Middle East, Egypt, and the Mediterranean depict winged beings, melding traits of human and animal forms. They guard temples and tombs. Contrary to popular greeting-card artwork, and even Renaissance art, angels are not human. They may appear that way, usually depicted as somewhat androgynous to make it clear that they are otherworldly and beyond the polarity of the material world, but traditional sources show them as monstrous and frightening. Angels appear as blazing light too terrible to behold. Other angels forgo the traditional two wings for four or six wings. They can have many eyes, more than one face, and animal parts blended with their bodies. Modern angelic mystics describe their “true” forms as blazing balls and swirling vortex patterns of light. Now these images are common to shamanic witches traveling to the Upper Worlds, as they have been to shamanic practitioners in ages past.

Angels act as intermediaries between the sky realms and the world of mortals. Some angels, usually those designated as archangels, have domain over a certain facet of creation, much like pagan gods. Some monotheists think of the pagan gods as early humanity’s interpretation of the angels, while I, and many other pagans, think of the angels as the forces that connect the divine to the human realm. Angels are messengers, not the primal power of the gods. They are the messengers, not the message itself.

As the Upper World parallel to the Underworld realm of the fey and Middle World elementals, the angelic realms guide creation. Various angels are said to “rule” over different aspects of life and nature, including the elements. Various angels rule over war, knowledge, magick, and healing. The Upper World holds the patterns of creation, and its metaphoric winds blow the “seeds” of life to the Underworld, and manifest in the Middle World. The angels act as intermediaries, like the winds of the Upper World, to aid the manifestation of the Upper World concepts in the two lower worlds.

Traditional angelic lore based on Judeo-Christian mysticism classifies angels into various orders, traditionally known as choirs. Each choir has its function and purpose. Each choir has a ruling angelic spirit. They all have correspondences with the elements, planets, and spheres on the Qabalistic Tree of Life. They are associated with certain symbols, words, incenses, and

charms. The study of such systems is not necessarily in the domain of our shamanic studies. In these exercises, we let experience inform us. We honor traditional information, yet feel free to go beyond or around it, as our experience takes us there.

Exercise 16

Angelic Journey

1. Start with the Shamanic Smudging Ritual from chapter 3. Use it to create your sacred space. If you choose to journey inside a magick circle, cast your sacred space. Start your journey music, and assume your trance posture. Have any power objects or tools you desire at hand, and wear your blindfold.

2. Do Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, counting backwards to focus your thoughts.

3. Call upon the gods and spirits to guide your journey:

 I call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my guides and guardians, to help me on this journey, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.

4. On the screen of your mind, conjure up the World Tree, the great tree with its branches holding up the heavens and its roots digging deep into the Underworld. With each breath, feel the tree become clearer in your perception.

5. Imagine that the screen of your mind is like a gateway. Step through it, and stand before the great tree. Touch its bark. Hear the wind blowing through its branches. Smell the earth. See the World Tree. Feel the World Tree. Know the World Tree.

6. State your intention:

 I ask to journey to the Upper World, to experience the angelic realm. If there is an angelic being for me to meet at this time, I ask for us to meet, for the highest good, harming none. I call upon my animal totem to guide me. So mote it be.

7. Follow your intuition and ascend the tree. Hold your intention to visit the

angelic realm, and be prepared for anything, from traditional angel images to otherworldly and strange beings. As always, follow your animal guide and your intuition. See where they lead. You may simply be introduced to the angelic energies, or find an ally in this realm.

8. When done, hearing the callback, return the way you came. Thank your animal guide and any angelic beings you have met. Come back to the base of the World Tree, and thank it for this journey. Step back through the screen of your mind, and look at the tree from a distance. Let your awareness of the tree fade away. Bring your awareness to the physical world. Do any necessary closing rituals.

The Higher Self

In our psychological model, the Upper World resonates with the superconsciousness. Mystics would call it divine consciousness or god consciousness, the Divine Mind. We each are connected to this superconsciousness. Our own divine wisdom and insight spring from this source. Through it we access our inner personal genius and receive our divine inspiration.

Our own personal spark of divine consciousness is recognized in all mystical traditions and has many names. Some think of it as the soul. Ceremonial magicians call it your Holy Guardian Angel, recognizing the angelic quality inherent in each person. Certain traditions think of it as the star self, believing that our inner light comes from the stars. Others call it the higher self. It is the part of us that is wise and all-knowing, and that completely understands our place in the overall pattern of life. Our place, our purpose in this lifetime, is called our true will, magickal will, or divine will. Connecting with our divine will is the most important form of magick we can do.

The higher self, like the Upper World, can seem distant, detached, and far away from us. It can be difficult to work with directly. Many invoke its aid in difficult situations, but have a hard time truly “knowing” the higher self. We use the lower self as an intermediary. Through our intuition and inner vision, we know the higher self, just as through ritual, magick, and honoring nature we know the divine.

Our spirit guides act as intermediaries between us and the divine self as well.

Guides from the Upper World are more “in tune” with the energies of the higher self, since you could say that the higher selves of all people reside in this realm.

This divine self can manifest in a manner similar to our spirit guides, so we may interact with it on a personal level. In fact, many schools of mystical thought say all spirit guides are manifestations of the higher self. When we think about the Principle of Mentalism (*ITOW,* chapter 8), we know that all things are connected, and at the deepest spiritual levels it’s hard to perceive a separation, but some spirits do seem to be a part of us, of our psyche, while others manifest in a manner that appears separate and distinct from us. Manifestations of the higher self are always clearly a part of you, a part of your own inner wisdom.

Such intimate knowledge of the higher self occurs over time, but does not come easily, for a level of self-knowledge, focus, and will is necessary to have direct contact. That is why we have intermediary spirits, to make contact easier. In a form of ceremonial magick popularly known as the Abramelin Operation, the process to gain contact with your Holy Guardian Angel takes six months, from equinox to equinox. The true test of success with such an operation is a continual contact with your higher self, consciously guiding and directing your life to fulfill your true will. The process is transforming. It’s a lofty goal and well worth the pursuit. This concept will be revisited in the fourth book of this series, *The Temple of High Witchcraft*, but until that time, you can still build a strong relationship with your higher self using other techniques.

When you first make contact with the Upper World self, there usually isn’t a strong visual component. This is a part of you, and manifestation may occur through feeling your own divine essence within and around you. It can be a reassuring yet vague presence. Some practitioners describe themselves as “vibrating faster.” It’s a subtle phenomenon. For others, their thoughts and feelings are transformed and elevated to nobler levels. Compassion with a level of detachment frames their experience for the time of the contact. The inner dialogue changes. We all carry on an inner dialogue, at least prior to our deeper metaphysical pursuits. We all have an inner conversation, thinking about the choices of our day and commenting upon events. When in contact with the higher self, that inner dialogue changes, and one “voice” becomes that of the higher self, urging us to see the highest manifestation of any situation,

looking to truly see the wisdom and blessing in all. For the visually oriented, the higher self can take on a visual appearance. Some find the higher self as an individual guide that can speak or guide a journey. Others merge with their higher self during a journey or meditation, recognizing that they are part of the same being. The higher self is beyond shape and form, although it can take any shape it desires to help you connect with it. Often the higher self takes the shape of a bird.

After working with it directly for a while, my higher self manifested in meditation as starlight, and would descend from the heavens as twinkling light and wrap itself around me for as long as we were in direct communication. After my initial shadow working, it merged with a manifestation of my shadow self to becoming a sparkling galaxy of light and dark. Many years later, my higher self changed, becoming more primal and animalistic—a blend of both human male and female aspects, along with animal images merged in, like many Greek gods. My higher self manifests with angelic wings, both goat and stag horns, snakeskin, claws, a tail, and hooves. Lately, the amalgam has been "crowned" with the starry lights that were the first manifestation of my higher self. As your relationship with the higher self changes, your manifestation of it will change.

Higher-Self Connection

In the shamanic context, there are three main ways in which you can develop contact with your higher self: evocation, invocation, and journeying.

Evocation is the simplest method. You simply ask for the presence of your higher self. It is always present and watching you, but your direct invitation to participate in events gives it a greater ability to interact. Your willingness to listen helps manifest its wisdom. You still might not directly connect with it, but you can get its messages through the wisdom of your lower self and other guides. To evoke the higher self, I usually say:

> *I call upon my higher self and my highest guides to help guide me in this situation, for the highest good, harming none. Hail and welcome.*

I do this whenever I am in a difficult situation and need that higher guidance. When I have a client for a healing or divination session, I do this evocation. I might have a client for what seems like an easy tarot reading, and deep issues

of past abuse and trauma unexpectedly come out in the session. Having that higher guidance can help me find the right words, techniques, and advice for my client to continue along the path of healing. I do this evocation when I see clients, teach classes, give lectures, have family discussions, and meditate.

My friend Christina had a difficult time connecting to any spirit guides because she always thought she was talking to herself. She didn't believe in the concept of spirit guides, but she did understand the concept of the higher self. She made an immediate connection to her higher self, who she hears only as a part of her inner dialogue, never visually, but her divine self acts as her primary guide, teacher, and guardian, with great results.

Remember that evocation opens an energetic link, a line between you and your guides and the Upper World of the higher self. That link, once opened, requires energy to maintain it. It is not as simple as asking for divine guidance as a part of your daily altar devotional. Formal evocation, no matter how simple, requires a devocation. You must close the link when you are done. If you don't, and you leave the channel "open" all day, you might find yourself slightly drained, mentally fatigued, or generally irritable and not know why. I close with this:

> *I thank and release my higher self and highest guides. Hail and farewell.*

Invocation of the higher self invites your higher self into you, to blend and merge with you on a deeper level than that of evocation. The higher self overshadows you, guiding your thoughts and actions. Essentially you become the higher self, at least for a short time. Traditional invocation techniques for working with various deities and spirits will be covered in greater detail in chapter 9. These same techniques can be used for the higher self, but you might find invocation experiences spontaneously.

Like formal evocation, if you invoke a spirit, deity, or even your higher self into your consciousness and body, it is important to have a formal release. Many people wish to absolve themselves of responsibility from life, and try to evoke or invoke the higher self twenty-four hours a day. Some do it to create a false sense of detachment, or a false sense of unconditional love they are not truly experiencing in the Middle World, but they prefer this false living because Middle World relationships are often difficult, painful, and hard work. Forcing

such connections ultimately fails and can create some psychological imbalances in the individual. Many think if they “release” their higher self, it will go away and never come back. That’s completely untrue. It can’t go away. It’s a part of you. Think of it like a phone call. You can call someone for advice when you need it—that’s a healthy thing. But you can’t have the phone line open to your friend twenty-four hours a day just in case anything comes up. This would be a waste of your time, energy, and the phone line. Call directly when you need to, but simply know your friend is always there for you, just a phone call away. The higher self will never give you a busy signal.

It’s best to realize that we have three selves—higher, lower, and middle—and a proper balance is required between the three. We are most conscious of our middle self, and living with our anchor in the Middle World, we must pay that reality a great deal of attention to keep ourselves healthy on all levels. Maintain your evocation/invocation for as long as you desire to maintain this contact with your higher self, and when you are done, perform a formal release, ending the evocation/invocation. Sometimes you will naturally feel the higher self release on its own, and that’s fine, but getting into the habit of formally saying “Hail and farewell,” even if it’s only in your inner voice, is a good magickal habit to have. I release my connection to my higher self after every class, client session, or meeting.

The last technique is a formal journey to the Upper World to meet with your higher self. You could encounter it as a seemingly separate entity, much like any other spirit. You could also feel yourself drawn to and merged with it for the short time you are in the Upper World. Your spirit body, or self-image, is merging with it. You are not necessarily drawing it into your physical body as you would in a formal invocation. Like any shamanic journey, the experiences are individual and experiential. Before you attempt this journey, make sure you have a solid connection with at least one animal guide who can help you through the process. Also do the initial Upper World journey (Figure 15) to make contact with the realm before you attempt to connect with your higher self. Previous familiarity with this realm will help you during any subsequent disorienting experiences.

As you practice these techniques, your natural relationship with your higher self will grow. The more contact you have, the more you will grow “in tune” with its energies and have less of a need for formal work in your day-to-day life.

You will naturally feel its presence closer and closer to you.

Exercise 17
Higher-Self Connection

Choose either evocation or journey work, and make a connection to your higher self. Save the invocation technique for a later date, when you are more familiar with formal invocations. Record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

As you grow in your Upper World work, you can adapt these techniques to connect with the higher selves of other people. With this connection, you will have a greater understanding of the person and your relationship, making issues easier to resolve on the physical plane. I recommend only two of the three techniques for working with other people's higher selves—evocation and journeying. Invocation is not appropriate for other people's higher selves.

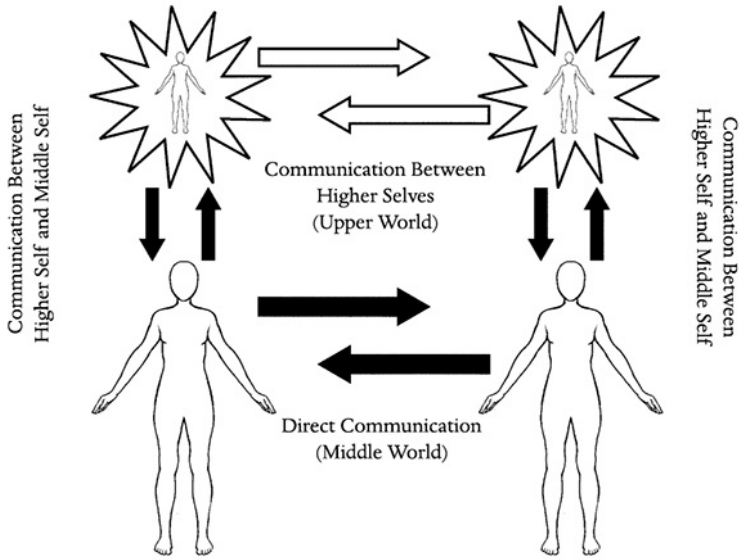


Figure 25: *Higher-Self Contact—Individual and Group*

For most situations, I simply add to my previous evocation, particularly when I'm seeing someone for a session or meeting. I say:

> *I call upon my higher self and my highest guides to help guide me in this situation. I call upon the higher self and highest guides of [name of the person] for the highest good, harming none. Hail and welcome.*

With this intention in place, our guides and higher selves can work things out on one plane of existence, and give us the necessary information to manifest it in

the Middle World. Most of my clients are never consciously aware of it, yet it makes a session go much more smoothly. Tarot readings get right to the point. Healing sessions are more intense. Family and business meetings work wonders. If the person or group is not open to doing this together as a formal evocation, you can do it silently in your mind as you begin. That's what I usually do when my clients are not pagan or when dealing with the more formal business world. I find it best to make all parties conscious of the process, but sometimes that's not possible.

To release, I simply reverse it, saying:

> *I thank and release my higher self and highest guides, and the higher self and highest guides of [name of person]. Hail and farewell.*

Other times, you are not physically present with all those involved. In fact, the technique can be used when you are having difficulties with someone. It is not a matter of coercing the person to your will, but helping you understand their point of view better so you can respond more appropriately to the situation. You can "speak" to their higher self, telling this person why you are upset, confused, or angry, and listen with your intuition for their response. Sometimes the answers will surprise you. These spirit conversations help lay the energetic groundwork for resolving the issue. These techniques are not, however, a substitute for communicating with people in the physical world. Even if your higher selves have worked something out, you still need to approach people in the physical realm and work out any issues in the Middle World. This will be much easier with your higher-self connections aiding the work, but you are the primary vehicle for the change.

I've evoked the higher self of others in formal ritual circles. After casting the circle, calling the quarters, and creating sacred space (see chapter 3), I evoke the higher self of whomever I need. In the circle I have a meditative conversation with the person. Although I think the formal ritual is the most powerful and clear technique, I sometimes forgo it in a pinch and cast a simple circle in my mind as I meditate, and ask the same questions. You can even visit your inner temple and invite the person's higher self to meet you there. Though I do love any work in the inner temple, some spirits and higher selves will not respond because the temple or ritual circle is too much "your territory," and they will want a more neutral meeting place. In such cases, it is necessary

to do an Upper World journey and visit the person's higher self in the Upper World.

I was amazed the first time I was guided to use this technique of distant higher-self contact. My partner and his friend run a youth group for gay teens. Early on in their work, before the more formal rules and boundaries were established, they were both personally involved in the lives of the youths, and by osmosis, so was I. One member of the group was abandoned by his family and almost ended up homeless. He had already been immersed in our lives, visiting for holidays and occasional dinners. We had a room for rent in our house, and offered it to him, but had to rescind our offer because the new board of directors for the group finalized the rules and prohibited personal involvement between the youth and the facilitators. I wasn't a facilitator of the group, so I still maintained personal contact, but he withdrew and his behavior became erratic, upsetting us all.

Not knowing how else to figure out what was going on, I evoked him in a magick circle, and had a vision of him, red-faced and crying, telling me that we had betrayed him. I was stunned. I gave this information to my partner and his friend, and they discovered this guy felt betrayed because he was offered this room and then told he couldn't have it, and no one made sure he really understood why. He was too embarrassed to say anything or ask questions. He just felt betrayed and unwanted again. Once it was explained, he joined us for the holidays, developed friendships, and continued on his path. If I hadn't done the evocation of his higher self, I would never have had the information needed to resolve the conflict. Time and again I have used this technique to discover that what I would have intellectually surmised to be the issue was not really the true cause of the problem. Follow your intuition, even if it doesn't make logical sense to you.

Remember that on the highest level, all our higher selves, all our true wills, are in perfect harmony. The more we resonate with our higher aspects, the more peace and clarity we will have, both personally and globally.

Offerings to the Upper World

When working with the Upper World, we learn to refine our energies, get clarity of thought and vision, and raise our vibration to facilitate contact with this

realm. Working with the refined energy of the Upper World brought into the middle realm will help bring that otherworldly clarity to your ordinary experiences. Refined energy is like clear water. As it fills us or our environment, it gently flushes dense, stuck energy from us, like pouring clear water into a muddy glass. Eventually the clear water will rinse the glass clean.

Facilitating the movement of energy between the worlds is extremely important. The energies do not remain stagnant in their own realms. Vital to life is the process of movement and change. One energy is transformed into the other as it moves between worlds, continuing the cycle of life. Like the life-giving light and rain from the sky, the refined energy flows down through our worlds to nourish and germinate new life.

Through our tree breathing exercise, we learn to harmonize the energies, but sometimes it is necessary to work with refined energy individually and directly. Moving energy is part of the path of being a priest/ess and shaman. Moving energy between the worlds is the heritage of the witch.

Exercise 18

Upper World Energy

Drawing upon the refined energy source is a very powerful experience, particularly after releasing dense energies to the Underworld for transmutation. The infusion of refined energy is the basis of initiation into certain healing arts from the East, though the methods are very different.

Like our exercise with dense energy (exercise 14), there are three basic ways one can exchange energy with the Upper World without the aid of a teacher. The first is to do a shamanic journey to the Upper World, looking for a source of vital refined energy. In can manifest as a spring or pool, snow on the mountaintops, clear crystals, fruit, elixirs, or even abstract light. Always follow the guidance of your power animal and spirits. They will guide you to the right source of refined energy and tell you how much to take. They may even inform you that it is not the right time to do this.

The second method is to do a meditation on the Upper World. Perform your tree breathing meditation (Exercise 6), but focus on the branches leading to the Upper World. Like a tree drawing in carbon dioxide and light, draw the refined energy in through your leaves and branches, bringing it down into your body.

Focus on the high, vibrant, vital vibration of the Upper World. When doing similar chakra meditations, we are drawing upon the energy of the literal sky, sun, moon, and stars. Reach beyond them, across the veil into the Upper World. Bring the vibrant energy down to you. Fill your body. Fill every cell with refined energy. Feel your body overflow, and fill your aura. Any excess can be grounded through your roots, much like grounding your dense energy, as in Exercise 14. When you learn both exercises, you can combine them, creating a more intense version of the tree breathing meditation.

The third method involves creating a refined energy well. It creates a temporary touchstone to the Upper World, bringing refined energy to your area. The vessel for the refined energy can be anything, but I prefer to use a candle. To me, the candle resonates with the Upper World. I use a white, seven-day, glass-jar candle. Cleanse the candle. Cast your magick circle. Then charge it to be a touchstone to the Upper World and its refined energy. As you charge the candle, imagine a pillar of light descending from the heavens and merging with the candle. Its refined energy radiates outward like light. When you light the candle, you activate the pillar. When you snuff it, you close this wellspring of energy. When lit, the candle raises the vibration of any area around it, making a natural sacred space, banishing unwanted energies and spirits and bringing clarity, peace, and harmony. You can rejuvenate, heal, think, and meditate in this space. When the candle is burned out, the touchstone is done and a new one is needed.

Whenever you do work with refined energy, and absorb it into yourself, you will find that if you are not clear of your denser energy, you will experience a "cleansing release." The issues associated with your dense energy will manifest as you release it. Physically it can manifest as aches and pains, cold or flu-like symptoms, nausea, or diarrhea. Mentally and emotionally you can find yourself reliving repressed thoughts and memories. They will pass as long as you don't hold on to them. To speed up the process, release your dense energy directly and/or work with more refined energy. Drink plenty of clear water to heal the body and help it release the corresponding physical toxins you're purging.

Try one or all of these techniques to work with refined energy, and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 15–18 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

Continuing Assignments

- Keep a traditional journal of your magickal experiences and those in your day-to-day life.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Practice the Second Attention exercises outlined in chapter 2.
- Continue to build your shamanic tools and witch bag.
- Be mindful of the Earth Mother and your relationship with her.
- Be mindful of dense and refined energies in your environment.
- Continue to work with sacred spaces in the middle worlds.
- Continue to build a relationship with your power animal and other spirits.

Tips

- Be aware of your higher self and the higher selves of others. Regularly call upon and connect with your higher self and the higher selves of others in your life. Notice the difference in situations when you do the evocation and when you do not.
- Don’t feel like your higher-self experiences have to be grand and dramatic. They are usually quiet and subtle, at least when starting out. Go with your first impressions.
- Be aware of the angels and other Upper Worldly beings, and if you choose, build a relationship with them.

[contents]

9

Lesson Five
Walking with the Spirits

You have explored the realms of the shamanic witch, and walked the paths above and below. You have encountered the denizens of the other worlds. Now it is time to take a deeper path into the world of spirits, and walk the path of partnership with these allies.

Shamans from every tradition ally themselves with spirits. Agreements are made. Partnerships are formed. Relationships are developed. Though some traditions of magick bind and command spirits, while others plead, shamans find a balance through partnership, reflecting the reciprocal relationship humanity has with the unseen world. Partnership with spirits is what separates shamanism from other forms of magick.

After becoming aware of the higher self, you might ask why you would want to work with any other spirits at all? Such beings act as intermediaries and translators between our conscious self and our divine wisdom. A good teacher, human or spirit, can do nothing better than connect you with your own divine self. Once you have made that connection, what need do you have of any other spirit?

The answer lies in partnership. We are all inhabitants of the worlds of the shaman. We are all building relationships and learning to get along. Together we are all creating a balance. What need do you have of other humans? Once you connect with divine guidance, do your friends, family, lovers and co-workers fall away from your life? No, of course they don't. They continue to be companions in your earth walk. Even supposed enemies and antagonists become valued teachers, making us aware of things we usually don't want to see. Spirit teachers and allies are like tutors, highly talented specialists, that our higher self contracts to help with our spiritual education. We usually don't listen to our own divine self as much as a spirit teacher. In turn, the spirit teacher is learning to build a bridge to the Middle World and create a more

evolved universe.

The physical and nonphysical worlds depend on each other. The exchange of energy between the worlds is necessary. The exchange occurs individually and communally. The rituals of ancient magickal cultures raised energy at appropriate times of the year. The energy sent to the gods and spirits is returned as blessings from the otherworld, and as the harvest and herd. Individual households and practitioners exchange energy. Some do it through ritual and offering. Others build a direct relationship with spirit allies, projecting their spirit into other realms and acting as the agent of spirits in the physical world.

I view the exchange of energy like the infinity loop (Figure 26). When you look at any one side of the veil, it appears to be a complete, individual circle, like the cycles of life. When you connect it to the other side of the veil, you see its true shape, the infinity loop. The circular pattern on the other side appears to be the mirror image of the one in the physical universe, going counterclockwise, or widdershins, rather than clockwise, or deosil. This accounts for why the mirror and the mirror image reflected in still water are both seen as gateways to the spirit realms. Spirits are also known for their strange, almost backward customs, reflecting this reversed image of the energy. The undoing rituals of chapter 2, designed to cultivate Second Attention, include walking backwards. Anything involving a reversed or backward motion helps us understand the ways of the spirit world.

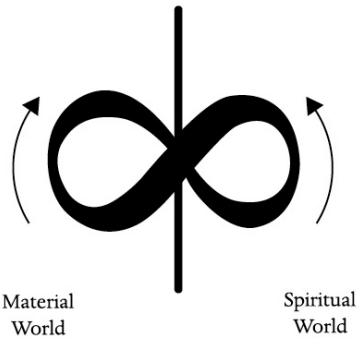


Figure 26: *Infinity Loop*

For otherworldly structures with more than one division, such as the World Tree, you can add to the infinity-loop imagery by making it a triple loop (Figure 27). Notice how much the Upper and Lower Worlds have in common energetically. Now it is easier to understand why many traditions do not

differentiate between the two unseen realms.

Spirit Allies

The difference between a shaman and other members of the community is the attention paid to the spirit worlds. Anyone who has a specific job will build contacts and allies specific to their field. Publicists work with publishers, editors, and authors. Spies have contacts in government agencies and intelligence communities. Musicians connect with booking agents, managers, and producers. Shamans do the same thing, but most of their contacts are in the spirit world.

Shamans and shamanic witches are the community members most strongly focused on the spirit realm. They are making contacts with spirits and forging strong relationships with these unseen allies. Shamans and shamanic witches act as the bridge between the material and immaterial worlds. Traditionally their livelihood, profession, and abilities depend on it. The shamans' ability to solve problems, receive healing energy, dispel illness, and receive prophetic insight stems from their relationship with the spirits. The spirits act as guides, informants, counselors, and allies. They lend their abilities to the shaman. A shaman with no allies is a poor shaman indeed.

In return, shamans offer their services to the spirits. They are bridges. Shamans oversee the correct exchange of energies between the worlds, both through communal rituals and personal work. Shamans guide the tribe in correct relationship with the plants, animals, and land. Their rituals help create peace and balance between the worlds. In many traditions, shamans are literally "called" by the spirits. The spirits recognize those who have an aptitude for walking between worlds. They seek out contact to cultivate that talent and build a bridge. Most shamans don't consciously choose the path. They are called. The magick is in accepting the call—recognizing what it is, and then acting upon it.

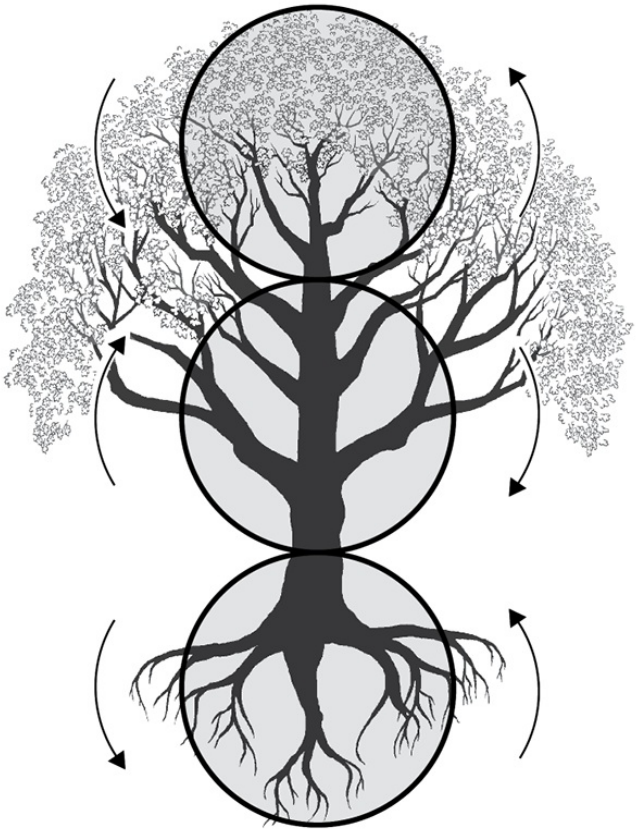


Figure 27: *Infinity Loops with the World Tree*

The spirits can have great power in many matters, but in certain earthly realms they are powerless. The spirits do not have dense physical bodies, as humans do. When a person does not hear a message from the unseen realms, it is traditionally up to the shaman, witch, or Druid to deliver the message. Most people ignore their intuition or inner guidance. The shamans remind us to listen and take an active role when necessary. In places where the land has been wounded or spirits are unhealthily bound, it usually takes a living agent to bring things back into balance and healing. Shamans serve as a bridge between the mortal and the divine. Many spirits can act only if invited into a space. They need the direction. They need the conduit and the ritual, or the shaman himself, as the link.

The agreements and contracts between spirit allies and shamanic practitioners may be at the root of the so-called devil's contract that medieval witches reportedly signed. Inquisitors told of a contract in blood signed by both witch and devil at black masses to receive their powers. Stories of such agreements make modern practitioners leery of the path, wondering what a spirit will ask of them. It's not a bad question to ask. When you work with

anybody, human or spirit, it is always good to know what you are getting into, and exactly what you are agreeing to do. Personally I have found that in working with most spirits, they ask only for what is necessary and usually for things we would normally do anyway.

When working with a spirit of healing and balance that resonates with you, such work agreed upon between the two of you serves both communities. They will not ask you to do anything harmful, malicious, or evil. They will only ask you to bring balance. They might ask you to do things that you wouldn't expect. I've been asked to do unusual rituals, even on vacation, as well as take on clients or students that I might not normally take, or make changes in my life, with diet and exercise, to be a stronger vehicle to partner with.

The strangest thing I was ever asked was from an Egyptian goddess. I had been working with Isis and Osiris in my meditations, and one night they introduced me to the cat goddess Bast. Bast said one of her children needed help, and in exchange for all the work I was doing with the Egyptian pantheon, I agreed to help. Bast showed me an image of a former co-worker, one who had some very catlike personality traits. I was asked to offer to teach this person a specific meditation technique. She did not believe in the mystical at all. It embarrassed me somewhat to offer this to her, and I was told by the gods that she would not accept my offer, but I was to plant a seed so it might sprout in the future for her highest good. I did it. It was a test of faith for me, a test of trust and of my relationship with the spirit world, but it paid off in the end. My relationship with the Egyptian pantheon deepened greatly. My trust in all my spirit relationships deepened, and I was able to take my practice to a new level, even though I never found out what happened to my co-worker. I really didn't need to know.

Spirit Tribes

Potential spirit allies come from a variety of sources. Although humans have parallels in the three worlds with the higher, lower, and middle selves, most spirits live in only one of the three realms. We have already tiptoed through the faery and angelic realms, and made our first contact with power animals, but they are not the only spirits we can find as partners.

Here are just some of the spirit tribes with whom you can explore

partnership. You have already encountered many of these kinds of spirits in the previous chapters. In this chapter you are encouraged to develop a deeper relationship with these beings.

Ancestors

Ancestor reverence is an important aspect of shamanic traditions. The ancestors still watch over and guide their living kindred. Through us, they have a touchstone to the Middle World. Through them, we have intermediaries in the spirit world who can intercede on our behalf. Honoring the ancestors is like caring for the roots of your tree. You must know where you come from to be firmly anchored in the present and be prepared for the future.

Angels

In Western magick, there are many angelic orders with a variety of purposes. Two orders seem to be most strongly associated with humanity—angels and archangels. Angels are typically considered companions and guardians of humanity. The archangels are better known in our myths and traditions. Each archangel rules over an aspect of creation, and humanity can petition an archangel for help in its area of specialty. Raphael is known as the divine physician, and he can be called on for all healing magick.

Animal Spirits

Animal spirits act as protectors, guides, tutors, and patrons, loaning their abilities to a shaman. Most importantly, working in shamanic relationships allows the totemic spirits to use their animal “medicine.” They spiritually “teach” their animal wisdom to correct imbalances in the shaman’s clients. A practitioner with many animal allies has an understanding and cure for many imbalances.

Deities

The deities of our oldest mythology show us aspects of the divine mind manifested through goddesses and gods. Deities have their own spheres of influence and agendas. They become patrons and teachers of spirit walkers who resonate with their sphere of influence and lessons.

Earthbound Dead

The earthbound dead come in several forms. Most people are familiar with

ghosts, the spirits of those who have died but remain bound to the Middle World. Many ghosts are not conscious spirits at all, but are echoes and fragments of the astral bodies of the dead who have moved on to the next life. In Mongolian shamanism, many believe one of our spirit selves remains in the Middle World as a nature spirit while our other selves move on to other lives. Looking through a modern lens at past cultures who buried kings and nobles at sacred sites, many practitioners believe that ancient sacrificial sects may have used magick to fuse a willing human spirit with an area of land, to act as an intermediary for the tribe between the worlds, as well as a guardian. In the next life, they continue to serve their community. Such “sleepers” have been excavated as preserved remains by modern archeologists. My own experiences with such earthbound dead have not yielded physical corpses, but I have encountered past human spirits from the Native American culture fused with the land of a particular area. Each continues to act as a guardian of its sacred site and a teacher to those who will listen.

Elementals

Those from the elemental planes are already our partners in ritual magick when we call upon the four quarters. They can be sought out in a shamanic journey when we have need of their particular wisdom or gifts. They in turn learn more about the human realm and how to master their own element in the Middle World.

Faeries

At first the faery folk do not seem to be willing guides, and many of the dangers associated with them seem to outweigh the benefits. In truth, the faeries and their corresponding devas and nature spirits make excellent allies when you find ones who resonate with you, your tradition, and your goals. As guides to the natural realm, they willingly teach us about nature and the Underworld, and share their gifts and pleasures when respected. There are many accounts of faeries bestowing the gifts of healing and seership. As some of the most sensual inhabitants of the spirit worlds, they seek to experience everything, including human partnership.

Guides

Spirit guides can come from any of the three worlds. Many are Lower World

spirits—those who have been human and those who have never been human. Some are deities or demigods. Many are the enlightened inhabitants of the Upper World, who understand the human condition and have been released from the cycle of rebirth. Any spirit with a wise viewpoint can be considered a guide.

Higher Self

The higher self is our constant ally, yet one that many people forget in favor of more interesting spirits. The higher self aids us because it wants us to know it and embody it more. Some traditions believe each higher self has another higher aspect, so the process of embodying it is continual.

Plant Spirits

Plant spirits are amazing allies to have. All plants have medicinal qualities to them. Many are physically medicinal, in the recognized herbal treatments and isolated chemical compounds they contain, but even nonmedicinal plants have spirit medicine. Just as with animal medicine, each plant can bring you back into balance with nature. A shamanic healer can not only administer the herbal remedies, but will partner with the spirit of the plant to heal on many levels simultaneously. Trees in particular hold a powerful healing force and act as record keepers in our world. I once met a man who told me that trees are story keepers, but they need translators. Usually you can find a rock near a tree, and by holding the rock to the tree and meditating, the tree will tell you, through the rock, what you need to know. I've tried that technique before, but have also talked to trees directly and learned some wonderful things.

Shadow

Like the higher self, the shadow is a constant ally. For most of us, it's an unconscious taskmaster, always trying to get our attention. As we learn to partner with it, we transform it into our ally. Never forget that at the core, the shadow wants to be acknowledged and respected for its wisdom and power. If you do, you will have a great advantage in transforming your life.

Star Spirits

Some shamans who are inclined to Upper World adventures ally themselves with spirits from the stars. These spirits have been described as the star nations and heavenly tribes to the spirits of the stars and constellations

themselves. They hold their own wisdom and medicine that can aid the shaman in his quest. Some think of modern alien-abduction lore as a form of misunderstood shamanic initiation. By looking at ancient texts in a modern light, some theorize that our ancestors were visited by “ancient astronauts” who seeded our culture with technological and magickal information. Although many believe this is a literal truth, others think of it as a visit from star spirits, nonphysical visitors, found in a cultural context that did not put the same emphasis solely on the physical and neglect the immaterial, as our modern culture does.

Stone Spirits

Like plant spirits, the consciousness of rocks, minerals, and crystals can be allied with shamans to heal. If you are partnered with a particular stone, and you know its medicine, you might not even physically need the stone to perform a shamanic crystal healing.

These are not, by far, the only types of spirits you can encounter and count among your allies. Many spirits defy description. Learn to work with your own experience, your own cultural and mythic lens, even if it differs from traditional lore.

Discernment

Discernment is an important tool in working with spirits. Which spirits are the right ones for you? Which spirits are the wrong ones for you? Certain spirits are dangerous and should be avoided. How is a new practitioner to know the difference?

There is no one easy, quick solution. How do you know when to trust a physical person in your life? Again, there is no easy way of knowing, but I usually base my decision upon the person’s words and actions and my overall intuition about the situation. Since spirit work in the shamanic worldview consists of partnerships and agreements, you must be certain you are willing to agree to things. You must know the spirits with whom you are making bargains.

There are many techniques for discerning helpful spirits and banishing unwanted spirits. You can ask the spirit your questions three times, because

many traditions believe if a spirit is asked something three times, it must answer truthfully the third time. You can use your magickal will to banish all unwanted, harmful spirits from an area, drawing a bright banishing pentagram during your journey (*ITOW*, chapter 9). If the spirit stays, it is most likely a helpful one.

My usual guideline is the sense of love I get from the spirit. I usually sense a genuine love from most spirit allies, whether they are from the Upper or Lower World. They want to help us for the overall good of all the worlds. Other times, following that guideline of sensing love from a spirit can be difficult. Since we are working with the shadow self, we may be afraid of spirit teachers who tell us and show us things we don't want to consciously acknowledge. Spirit teachers can be harsh taskmasters, seemingly creating problems, yet the solutions lead to our growth. Their words are often unflattering, showing us our weaknesses and issues rather than covering them up. The spirits of the Underworld, the dark goddesses and gods, can be quite frightening. These difficult experiences are given to us in love, but it might not seem like love at the time when you are feeling fear, anger, or pain. In such instances, I trust my other guides to help me.

Many times the guides I already have a relationship with will let me know which spirits to trust and not trust. Learn to rely on the instincts of your power animal. If your animal guides you away from a spirit, listen to it. Sometimes your guides will lead you into frightening places and seemingly leave you there. Trust that you are meant to be there and will learn great things from the experience. Other times you may be fascinated—more likely distracted—by another spirit or location, and your animal guide is attempting to take you to a new location. Pay attention to your animal guide. Learn to trust it, and yourself. In the end, you will know what is simply the manifestation of an internalized fear, and what is a mischievous or malicious spirit. Honor your own wisdom as well as that of the spirits.

Spirit Teams

As we develop relationships with our allies, we create our own team of entities who fulfill certain functions in our life. We create our own extended family. Certain spirits will act as guardians. Others will be teachers. Some will act as

healers. Many will not always be clear in function, or will take on multiple roles. You can look to chapter 13 in *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* for some clearly defined roles that your spirit guides may assume in your spiritual development, but more importantly, look to your directional spirit wheel from chapter 3 of this book (see Figure 4).

Through these lessons, you will meet many spirits. While you work with them, decide which direction each of them belongs to in your life. Do this not only for your animal and plant spirits, as you gather your allies, but any spirit who works with you. Where does it resonate for you? It might not have a direction, and that's okay too. As you continue your shamanic studies, you will gather more allies and continue to work closely with the ones you already have. Like any friendship, the bonds will strengthen with time and commitment.

When you do your Shamanic Smudging Ritual to create sacred space (chapter 3), think of each ally you have in each of the directions. When you do this ritual before a journey, you are preparing to make your connections to your most trusted allies. The ones who need to be consciously present with you will be there.

Most beginning shamanic witches wonder if they have enough spirit allies. They feel they do not have a good team. Building a team comes with time, practice, and intention. If you got fifty new friends all at once, none of them would be a deep, long-term, meaningful friendship. As you build each relationship one by one, you take time to get to know the spirits you call your team and, eventually, your spirit family.

When you build a relationship with a new spirit ally, find or create a fetish charm for it. Create a symbolic touchstone for its energy. Bless it in a ritual, calling upon the spirit's own blessing for the charm, and add it to your witch bag (see chapter 6). Such talismans are called ongons in Mongolian shamanism, though the practice can be found in most shamanic traditions. A shaman will use this charm in ritual, carry it upon his person or in a medicine pouch, or even give or loan it to clients to connect with that spirit ally for a time. Many fetishes are ritually "fed" with water, milk, oil, or even blood to pay respect to the spirit. The offering is energy, and by "feeding" energy to your spiritual link, you strengthen it. It is similar to the offerings to the faery folk and ancestors. Modern practitioners find other ways to strengthen the relationship and offer energy. The simple practice of carrying something representative of

the ally, and taking time to consciously acknowledge that ally, is the perfect way to build a relationship with it.

Invocation

At certain times in a magickal practice, it is important that a practitioner so strongly identify with a spirit and its abilities that she embodies that spirit. The practitioner is encompassed by the spirit's power and personality. Many different mystical traditions practice this technique, though they use different names for it. In witchcraft, this spirit work is called invocation.

Invocation is a word often used synonymously with evocation, though the two are technically different. A variety of traditions use them interchangeably, and on occasion I am guilty of this too, for the difference is subtle.

Evocation is the summoning of spirits. Their presence usually manifests in a way that is discernable, though some manifestations are very subtle and only noticeable to those with highly developed psychic abilities. Such spirits manifest as part of a ritual, and are summoned to do work for the witch or magician. Calling the four elements in a magick circle is a form of evocation. The presence of the elemental is usually felt—heat for a fire element, coolness for water, a breeze for air, and a stronger sense of gravity for earth. Summoning a spirit for protection is also an evocation.

With invocation, you draw the spirit into your body. You internalize the energy of the spirit with your own vessel. You become its anchor in the physical plane, while it channels its power and wisdom through you directly.

In traditional Wicca, invocation takes place as a part of the Great Rite and Drawing Down the Moon. The high priestess is the vessel of the Goddess. The high priest invokes the Goddess into the high priestess. Then the high priestess invokes the God into the high priest. Both embody the Lady and Lord to the coven. During a ritual, the two invoked beings confer blessings, initiate, and prophesy. The ritual poetry of The Charge of the Goddess (*OTOW,* chapter 11) is used as part of the ritual, as the invoked priestess recites the words of the Goddess. Though not as well-known, the God has his own form of invocation, recited to draw in the God force (Figure 28).

Some traditions invoke specific gods and goddesses, while others focus on the grand embodiment of the Goddess and God, without specific names.

Invocation of specific deities is sometimes referred to as Assumption of the Godform, and is prevalent in ceremonial magick.

For many high priestesses and priests, this is simply ritual by rote or dramatic ritual acting. For others, it is truly an incorporation of the divine couple. Solitary practice doesn't focus on invocation during initial training since the practice is difficult for a witch without the support of another priest/ess or coven. Solitaries embody both the Goddess and God, as when performing the Great Rite, but the process is not quite the same as in a traditional coven. Certain traditions of Wicca prohibit the attempt of invocation rituals until completion of the second-degree initiation.

By the flame that burneth bright,
O Horned One!
We call thy name into the night,
O Ancient One!
Thee we invoke, by the moon-led sea,
By the standing stone and the twisted tree,
Thee we invoke where gather thine own,
By the nameless shrine forgotten and lone.
Come where the round of the dance is trod,
Horn and hoof of the goatfoot God!
By moonlit meadow, on dusky hill,
When the haunted wood is hushed and still.
Come to the charm of the chanted prayer,
As the moon betwitches the midnight air,
Evoke thy powers, that potent bide
In shining stream and the secret tide.
In fiery flame by starlight pale,
In shadowy host that rides the gale,
And by the fern-brakes fairy-haunted
Of forests wild and woods enchanted.
Come! Come!
To the heart-beats drum!
Come to us who gather below
When the broad white moon is climbing slow
Through the stars to the heaven's height!
We hear thy hoofs on the wind of night!
As black tree branches shake and sigh,
By joy and terror we know thee nigh.

We speak the spell thy power unlocks
At Solstice, Sabbat and Equinox.

Figure 28: *Invocation of the Horned One*

Other forms of invocation can be found throughout ancient and modern traditions. Many forms of ancient prophecy were most likely forms of invocation. Invocation might have been involved in the ancient oracles of the gods and goddesses. The traditions of ceremonial magick, from the traditions in ancient Egypt and Greece to the modern Hermetic ones, have used the practice of invocation.

Practitioners of the various African Diaspora traditions, particularly the traditions of Voodoo, have powerful experiences of invocation. The spirits of the tradition, known as loa, interact with their practitioners through a spontaneous form of invocation known as riding. The loa "rides" one of the ritual participants, speaking and acting through the participant's body. Particular loa grant their "mount" gifts and abilities during the time of the ritual. At times such gifts and abilities are the test to know if one is truly being ridden by the loa or not. Some participants report having been granted some quite extraordinary abilities, such as holding hot coals in their hands or even mouth without injury. After the session, the participants usually don't remember the experience and are overwhelmed with deep emotion.

During the birth of our New Age, invocation came in the form of modern séances. Spirits would speak through a medium. People would visit a medium to know if their loved ones had crossed over and were all right. They would also come to discover family secrets, such as where the jewels were hidden. By the start of the twenty-first century, television shows popularizing mediumship have made it more understood and accepted. When viewed through a shamanic lens, such séances are much like a form of ancestor reverence.

The concepts of mediumship are applied to other forms of spirits, in what modern mystics now call channeling. Many psychic readers use this technique for gaining spiritual counseling, speaking to spirit guides with the wisdom applicable to the situation. Though channeling is typically associated with the more celestial traditions of the New Age, channeling angels and aliens who write best-selling books, you will also find it in the "divinely inspired" mystical

text of ceremonial magick. It could be said that Aleister Crowley's famous *The Book of the Law* was channeled. In the broadest sense, you could also consider the texts of the Bible as channeled material from a spirit.

Channeling comes in two basic forms—conscious channeling and trance channeling. Conscious channeling is much like having a strong clairaudient connection to a spirit while still conscious, and the willingness and ability to repeat that spirit's message. Basically the channeler is the mouthpiece of the spirit, but the channeler still has free will as to what is repeated and might hear the message incorrectly when filtered through the ego. In this way, conscious channeling is much like evocation, not true invocation.

Trance channeling, also called full-body channeling, is when the channel's conscious self either vacates the body or becomes submerged. The channeled spirit assumes motor control of the body and can deliver its message directly. The channel's voice, mannerisms, body language, and especially the aura change completely. Some people are very uncomfortable with the idea of giving a discarnate being control over a human body, feeling that if the spirit was meant to have a body, it would already have one. So be sure you know and trust the spirit partner to whom you relinquish control.

Though modern channeling has "civilized" the process of invocation, where things are taken in a question-and-answer session, shamans have been doing the same work as a channel, but without the modern trappings and through more primal rituals.

While our definitions of the two forms of channeling make the process of invocation seem strictly black or white—either you do it or you don't—there are actually several levels of the invocation process. Each has gifts to share, and none is better than the others. These levels or gradations of experience make the idea of invocation less daunting than it may first seem.

If you have been following the course material in this book, you have already had an experience somewhat similar to invocation—shapeshifting. In a totemic shapeshifting experience, you identify so strongly with an animal spirit that you become it. Though most shift the shape of their energy body to match the form and perspective of the animal, some shamanic practitioners report "merging" with their animal. With this process, it's more like the animal spirit is invoking the shaman. Through the merging, the human spirit can see and feel this new perspective, but has a vehicle and guide to direct the experience.

Although invocation can involve animal spirits (and such practices might be the roots of our were-beast mythologies), usually the process involves deities or enlightened guides and ancestors. Each practitioner performs their invocations differently, so there is no one way to do it for everybody. As one of my teachers once told me, these are the mysteries, and the mysteries really must be experienced to be understood. Descriptions can partially prepare you, but can never convey the entire experience.

Although not true invocation, the experience of overshadowing is a start. In the overshadowing experience, a wise spirit or deity is energetically around or over you, providing energy, support, and knowledge. Some psychics can actually see or feel the presence over the practitioner. This happens in many traditions, not just shamanic witchcraft. Teachers and healers experience this, feeling they are being guided, like an instrument, by divine forces. It also occurs in rituals, readings, and meditation.

When I experience overshadowing, I usually feel like one of my patron gods or guides is watching my back, standing very close to me, and is much larger and taller than me. I sense this in the waking world, eyes open, without being deep in a meditative state. The proximity of my patron gives me a sense of divine protection. Our communication is much easier. Usually I can only understand my guides in deeper states of meditation, but as the overshadowing experiences began, somewhat spontaneously, I could access their wisdom and advice in the waking world, as I was doing other things. They felt more in the Middle World, rather than me journeying to another realm to meet with them. Both of us were between the worlds, finding a middle ground.

If you experience overshadowing frequently—particularly with spirits and guides that are not deities or enlightened spirits but rather with spirit guides, animals, and allies who are walking their own path, simply in a different world—you could have a “co-walker” relationship. The spirit is more physically present with you in the world, not necessarily invoked into your body, but definitely a part of your energy field, allowing it to be more present and participate in the world and aiding in our overall multidimensional existence. If certain spirits consist of less than the traditional four elements, they need to partner with others to experience the full range of existence. They cannot access the spirits of the upper realms easily, and humans, as beings of the

Middle World, act as bridges. Sometimes such relationships, particularly when established permanently, are referred to as spirit marriages, such as the faery marriage, where a faery seer is bonded, or married, to a faery guide in a spiritual partnership. Co-walking partnerships of several beings create a powerful gestalt, capable of greater magick and spiritual travel. As you learn from this partnership, so does the spirit, and this partnership will provide you both with interesting insights and abilities. A co-walking relationship is a true partnership with your spirit ally.

True invocation is true surrender to the spirit into your body. That's why many witches reserve it only for deities, or their master healing spirit guide. They invoke a spirit they totally trust, and do not attempt invocation with any random spirit. Very conservative practitioners will not invoke a spirit guide or deity, but only the higher self.

For many witches, at least when initially trying these techniques, the spirit is incorporated or blended with their own consciousness. They still have a measure of control and awareness, yet are bonded with a consciousness in and around their body, acting much like a co-pilot. I find this incorporation technique to be the most empowering of invocations. It allows you to more directly co-create with your spirit ally and work together to produce a change.

The traditional invocation is when your own consciousness is either submerged in the larger energy of the spirit ally, or appears to vacate the body, to make room for that spirit. Recipients of the invocation may feel disconnected from the events, or may feel like they occurred in a dreamlike state, with vague memories. The advantage of this form of invocation is that you put total trust in the spirit ally, relinquishing your own ego and control issues. You must make sure you truly trust the spirit for such a surrender of control and ego.

Concerns about Invocation

All of these forms of invocation are very helpful, and it's up to you to find the ones that are right for you. To some, the idea of invocation might sound quite fearful, akin to possession. Invocation is not the same thing as possession, though many Westerners confuse the two. The idea of a spirit taking possession of an unwilling body is actually much rarer than Hollywood would

have you believe. The results are also far less dramatic than what is depicted in movies. Such soul sicknesses and their remedies will be discussed in detail in chapter 15.

The main differences between invocation and possession for the practitioner are free will and trust. A mystic performing an invocation is willingly participating—in fact, asking—for the experience. The ritual is a boundary, calling upon a specific spirit with whom the mystic has a relationship on some level. The ritual has a beginning, middle, and end, and at the end, the invocation is ended and the connection is stopped. In a specific tradition, all participants, physical and material, have agreed upon this structure.

Not all shamanic practitioners perform invocations. Though it is a highly enlightening and personally moving experience for many of us, you should not feel forced to do anything you don't wish to do. Respect your own limits and boundaries. One school of thought says that if an entity does not currently have a body, you should not give it access to yours. I understand the sentiment, and in some cases I agree, but the varying degrees of invocation can be amazingly enlightening experiences.

As you develop more confidence in yourself and your magickal abilities, you can always return to this technique if you desire. I suggest that as you develop your relationship with your primary spirit allies and totems, ask them if this experience is correct for you at this time.

Exercise 19

Invocation

There is no one correct way to perform an invocation, from the traditional team of High Priest and High Priestess of Wicca to the spontaneous mergings of modern mystics. But here is a general framework that I find useful.

1. Decide on what entity you wish you invoke and why. The best entities are spirits with whom you already have a relationship. I prefer patron deities and spirit guides who help me teach and heal. Then decide why are you doing this. Are you seeking answers to specific questions? Do you plan on doing a banishment of an unwanted spirit? Do you want the entity to do healing work through you? Are you open to the entity's will in this world? Are you simply doing it for the experience? Be clear in your intent before

you start.

2. Create a sacred space through your Shamanic Smudging Ritual and/or the magick circle, depending on the circumstances (see chapter 3). Some prefer to do this in a group so they have psychic support from others and don't have to worry about such things as circle casting. They can focus on invocation while the group casts the circle. The ritual can involve items that correspond with the entity's sphere of influence. If you are calling upon a war deity, you might use red candles, dragon's blood incense, iron nails, hematite or bloodstone, spicy fire herbs, and a ritual sword. If you are not sure of working correspondences in magick, review chapters 12 and 13 of *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft.* I highly recommend performing your first invocation in a magick circle, perhaps as part of a modified Great Rite, using ritual poetry to help the invocation process.

3. Enter an altered state. You can do this through Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State, or other techniques. Many prefer a physical exhibitory technique for invocation, and have drumming, music, or dance as the focus.

4. Contact the entity you wish to invoke. You can do this silently in your mind, speaking in your silent magickal voice, or out loud, through a ritual invocation. Tailor the invocation to the individual entity. Call upon names, titles, and qualities associated with the spirit. As part of your invocation, state whatever work you wish to do with this entity. I suggest something like this as an outline, altered for your specific needs:

> *I, [state your name], call upon [state the name of the entity/spirit/deity]. Spirit/God of (list the entity's qualities, titles, and description), I ask that you come in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust to this sacred space. I seek your blessings. I seek your wisdom. I seek your ways. Come be with me. I seek to partner with you, to have your will worked through me, for the highest good, harming none. I invoke you. So mote it be.*

5. Most witches focus on the crown chakra, at the top of the head, and perceive the entity descending down from the skies through the crown and into the body. Other times, particularly with Lower World beings, the entity rises from the ground and comes up through the feet, legs, and root chakra. If it is a part of a Drawing Down the Moon ritual, you can draw the

light of the moon down with your athame and into the crown, or drink the energy of the Goddess in through your chalice water once you have symbolically performed the Great Rite.

6. Notice how your body, perceptions, thoughts, and energy change. Most practitioners will remain conscious, and blended with the entity, at least initially. Sometimes the entity feels too "big," and it's as if the entity is both inside and outside of you, surrounding you entirely.

7. Do the work you planned on for this partnership.

8. At the conclusion of your work, release the spirit. Close the ritual with a "de-invocation," or devocation. Simply thank and release the entity, much like you would a quarter when releasing a magick circle. Feel the entity leave you as it came. Those who do not do such releases are subject to mystical delusions, since they start to personally identify with the energies they harness, losing their own sense of self and reality. The boundaries of the ritual, the beginning and the end, prevent this from happening, so make sure you release. Say:

> *I, [state your name], thank and release [state the entity's name] from this invocation. I completely release you from my body, mind, heart, and soul, for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be. Blessed be.*

9. Release your circle if you have cast one. Make sure to ground yourself.

My own experiences with invocation have leaned toward overshadowing and incorporation rather than truly losing awareness. In this sense, you learn to partner with the spirit ally on a more fully conscious level. It can be powerful in ritual work and healing.

Some amazing healing sessions in which I have been honored to take part have been when my master spirit guide asked to be invoked. In one particular session, for a man close to death but facing a painful surgery to remove an intestinal obstruction, I found myself invoking my master teacher spirit, the wizard deity Gwydion, of Welsh myth. I found myself doing rituals of which I had no previous knowledge. The family who attended had a very magickal experience, as the hospital played a Christian psalm at the same time I was deep into the ritual, though I didn't notice it. Although he was still very sickly

with a variety of other illnesses, the intestinal block vanished, leaving the doctors perplexed yet very respectful of his “healing” minister, to the point of asking my intuitive opinion on future treatment. Such a dramatic healing had never occurred before in my practice, and although I have little memory of the actual situation, I know it was the power of the God working through me, through the invocation.

When feeling in psychic danger in a spiritually disturbed environment, I have invoked dark goddesses and banished spirits of the restless dead back to the Underworld. I didn’t actually banish them. The Goddess did, through me, protecting me in the process. In these cases, the deity prodded me to do the invocation. I didn’t necessarily seek it out. The deity guided me to do so.

Every year my partner and I do two ritual invocations of the Waxing God and Waning God, known as the Oak King and Holly King, at the two solstices. Through us, they perform their battle to determine who will rule the next half of the year. The younger king, the Oak King, rules from Yule to Midsummer, while the god of death and horn, the Holly King, rules the other half of the year. In such rituals we find ourselves saying and doing things so spontaneously they are said and done through us, by the gods, rather than originating in our own minds. We are simply the instruments. Our covenmates think we have rehearsed the poetry and actions because they were so smooth, but they were truly inspired by our divine invoked partnership.

When I was teaching a class on how to assume the godform, one student said, “I can’t believe something that beautiful was in me!” Acknowledgment of our own divine beauty is one of the reasons we do invocation. We embody the divine, and the divine embodies us.

Ancestors

Ancestor reverence is a pivotal part of both traditional shamanic practices and witchcraft. Both traditions honor the wisdom of the past and respect our elders. The witch’s highest holy day, Samhain, is a ritual day for honoring the ancestors. When you look to the lore of Samhain, it’s obvious to see the shamanic roots of witchcraft.

The Druids, a caste of Celtic priests and priestesses that modern witches look to as spiritual forebearers, had a strong belief in the power of the

ancestors and reincarnation. The children are our ancestors reborn, as the Druids believed a reincarnating spirit to flow along a tribal, or now genetic, line.

As physical features are passed along the blood, so are spiritual talents and gifts. The affinity for magick or prophecy is passed from parent to child. Celtic traditions associate specific physical traits, such as green eyes and red hair, to be a mark of one with the powers of the witch but such traits and abilities are not dependent on specific physical characteristics or a genetic lineage. We don't need a great witch in our family tree to claim the traditions of witchcraft. Many of our ancestors are spiritual in nature, not connected to us by genetics or even location, but through tradition, action and spirit. Many of our past heroes are like spiritual ancestors. Taught in a Celtic tradition, but not being of true Celtic blood, I still look to the heroes of Celtic myth as my spiritual ancestors. Specific cultures and traditions call to us because of our own past life experiences, making such cultures and people just as valid to venerate as genetic ancestors.

Ancestors as Spirit Allies

Aboriginal cultures believe we stand upon the shoulders of the ancestors. Without their work, both their past accomplishments when they were alive and their loving support from the spirit world, we would not be where we are today. The most revered and respected spirit allies are considered to be grandmothers, grandfathers, great aunts, great uncles, and cousins.

Certain shamanic traditions divide the ancestor realms based on the merit of the soul in life. This is probably where we find the root of modern Christian heaven and hell mythology. In particular cultures, such as the Norse, different lands were designated for those who simply died and lived an honorable life, those who died with dishonor, and those who died a hero. Places of the dishonored dead were not necessarily realms of torture or abuse. Modern pagans look at such divisions as different refinements of energy. They believe that those who lived dishonorable lives go to a realm to learn, understand, heal, and work on their karma, planning their next return to the world.

When looking to the ancestors for guidance, modern practitioners should look at those who led honorable lives, and those heroes, both personal and cultural, that inspire. Here you will find the wise ones who will guide your path.

We find many examples of shamanic ancestors in the European traditions. If you think the path of witch isn't shamanic, all you have to do is look at these towering figures to see the shamanic heritage. Many are mortals who walked the earth. Some are considered gods, yet their struggles contain the human story of transformation that every shaman undergoes. Many traditions of witchcraft and paganism see themselves as literally descended from a particular god. Others are found somewhere between the realms of mortals and gods, legends, and it is unclear if they were historical figures or amalgams of folk tales. Yet their energy—god, mortal, or otherwise—is available to us for guidance and inspiration. Here are some spiritual ancestors with whom you might find kinship.

A. E. Russell

A. E. Russell is the literary alias of George William Russell, a poet, painter, and friend of William Butler Yeats. He was born in April 1867. He had lifelong contact with the faery folk. He documented his experiences with the faery tribes, giving descriptions and hierarchies along with beautiful artistic renditions of the beings. A. E. brought a focus on the Goddess to his take on the faery tradition, and he applied the wisdom he learned from the faeries in his artistic life.

Fiona Macleod and William Sharp

William Sharp was a Scottish critic and biographer who published a number of works under the name Fiona Macleod. Some dismiss the Fiona Macleod persona as a literary device, while others believe Sharp suffered from a personality disorder. Hugh Mynne, author of *The Faerie Way,* states that perhaps Fiona was truly Sharp's spirit ally and faery lover. The work of W. B. Yeats, a friend of Sharp, sheds light on Sharp's experience, as Yeats consulted with MacGregor and Moina Mathers of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Fiona wrote many books on the way of the faery and the Tuatha de Danaan, also bringing a goddess focus to the traditions of old. Though his encounters with Fiona were very blessed and came with great gifts, he also suffered through periods of mental illness. Sharp struggled with his shadow side, his faery lover, and mental illness, finally passing in 1905 in Sicily. Decades later a medium in England received a message from Sharp referring to himself/herself as Wilfion. Apparently the two ascended to a more

harmonious state after passing from this world.

Orpheus

Orpheus is the son of the god Apollo and the muse Calliope. He is a great musician and poet, recognized by mortals and gods alike for his skill and depth. Orpheus' wife, Eurydice, died shortly after their wedding. She was fleeing the advances of Aristaeus, and stepped upon a poisonous snake and was bitten. Orpheus lamented the loss of his wife, singing his woeful songs to gods and mortals alike. His grief was so strong that he sought out the shade of his love, descending to the Underworld of Hades and Persephone, overcoming all the challenges that keep living mortals from the realm of the dead. The king and queen of the Underworld were so moved by his determination and passion that they allowed his wife to rise with him—on one condition. Eurydice would follow him as his shadow until they reached the light of day. If he looked back in doubt, she would return to the Underworld forevermore. At the last moment, he believed Hades played him for a fool and looked behind him, to see his love tumble back to the Underworld. He wandered in his grief and was said to be killed by the Maenads, the wild women followers of Dionysus, who tore him limb from limb in their religious frenzy. They threw his head and his lyre into the river Hebrus, where he continued to sing his sad songs. The muses buried his body in Libethra, and Zeus placed his lyre in the stars as a constellation.

A large body of mythology is attributed to Orpheus. A mystery school in the ancient world was built around this body of work, with accompanying rituals and traditions. The Orphic Mysteries are considered part of the more shamanic tradition practiced by the Greek mystics.

Odin

Odin, also known as Wotan, is the great all-father of the Aesir, the ruling tribe of gods in the Norse pantheon. Though he has some kinglike attributes, he is far better known as a wanderer through the nine worlds seeking wisdom. Odin is equated with Hermes and Thoth and is known for his ability to inspire through poetry and berserker rage. Perhaps the seeds of Odin's mythology can be found in the practices of the Norse shamans, for Odin grew in power as his wisdom grew, through a series of harsh trials. He sacrificed an eye for a drink from the well of wisdom. Jealous of Freya's magick, he hung himself from the World Tree for nine days and nine nights with no food or water, his side

pierced with a spear. By the ninth night, he received a vision of the runes in the branches of the World Tree, and descended with their full magickal knowledge at his command. Odin is known for his ability to confer with the dead, and for his two raven totems who search out the nine worlds for him.

Freya

Freya is the primary goddess of the Vanir, the defeated tribe of gods in the Norse myth cycle. She and her brother Frey were traded to the Aesir tribe to keep the peace between the two groups. Like Odin, she underwent many shamanic themes in her story. She is known for a falcon-feathered cloak, and shapeshifts into a falcon at times. In seeking out greater magick, she visited the four dwarves of power in the Underworld. Though in many versions of the story her journey's purpose is solely for the metal gold, she had no need of it, for when she cries, her tears that touch the earth become gold, and the tears that touch the sea become amber. In truth, she was seeking out the mysteries of the four dwarves, symbolic of the four directions and elements. She chose to spend a night with each one to get her four-part necklace, the Brisings. With it, she had greater mastery over the forces of magick and creation.

Merlin

To me, Merlin is the quintessential shamanic witch figure. Though most modern people think of him as the stately court magician of King Arthur, with star-covered blue robes and a pointed hat, the traditional lore of Merlin is that of an inspired wild man—melding many characteristics of the magician with the Druid, witch, shaman, and mad poet. In the classical lore, his tales include stories of his unusual youth as well as his elder years. As a child he gave prophecy and was said to be born of a mortal woman and a spirit for a father. His most famous tales are of guiding the lineage of the king and then protecting and guiding Arthur to embody the aspect of the sacred priest-king in relationship to the Goddess and the land. Merlin was guided by the powers of the otherworld, and the Goddess manifested as the Lady of the Lake. He held a great reverence for the role of land in relationship with the sacred king and queen. If the literary figure is based on an actual person, he was much more likely to have been a skin-wearing magick worker than a civilized scholar-magician. Some witches believe that Merlin is not a single individual, but a title for a variety of mages in the British Isles, perhaps tracing their lineage back to

the lost lands of Atlantis. The presence of Merlin is readily available for aspiring shamanic witches.

Robert Kirk

The Reverend Robert Kirk is best known for his book *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, written in 1690–1691, just before his death. It was rumored that he did not actually die, but was kidnapped to Faeryland because he spoke too freely about the Siths (the Scottish word equivalent to the Irish Sidhe). He wrote quite clearly about the real and independent existence of the faery folk. His ideas echo those of more tribal shamans, believing spirits to be living beings, with their own lives and worlds, who seek to be in harmony with humanity. He is an excellent spiritual ancestor for those reconciling psychic/shamanic experiences in the craft with more traditional forms of Christianity.

Taliesin

The reborn son of the Welsh goddess Cerridwen, Taliesin embodies the archetype of the shapeshifting wise shaman. Originally her servant, Gwion Bach, he was charged with stirring her cauldron to brew a potion of wisdom and enlightenment for Cerridwen's dark and ugly son Afagddu. As the brew boiled away, Gwion burned his finger on three magickal drops, and sucked his thumb to relieve the pain. In that moment, he received all the knowledge and wisdom of the potion, and instantly realized that Cerridwen would kill him. He left as the cauldron cracked and the remaining potion turned to poison. Cerridwen pursued him. Each in turn shapeshifted to outwit the other. First Gwion shifted into the form of a hare to run away, but Cerridwen turned into a greyhound to outrace him. Then Gwion came to a river and transformed into a fish, but his pursuer became an otter. He jumped out to become a bird in midflight. Cerridwen pursued as a hawk. Finally Gwion shapeshifted into a grain of wheat to hide in a pile of grain. Cerridwen become a hen and ate him.

The transformations are symbolic of initiations through the four elements—fire, water, air, and earth, respectively. The story does not end with Gwion's death, but his rebirth, as Cerridwen surprisingly gave birth to him nine months later. He was reborn as Taliesin, the shining brow. She could not kill him, but cast him out on a raft, much like Moses floating down the Nile. Like Moses, Taliesin was adopted. His wisdom was evident in early childhood with his

adopted family, using his wit, words, and songs to create change. Taliesin grew into a great bard with many magickal skills, giving Cerridwen the title of Mother of All Bards.

Thomas Rhymer

Thomas Rhymer, also known as Thomas of Erceldoune, was born in the early 1200s. In his time he was known as a bard, prophet, and poet, an heir to the lore of Celtic traditions as he traveled England and Scotland. His recorded prophecies were avidly observed several centuries after his death, and his poetry is still a well of wisdom for modern occultists of the faery traditions. His best-known works, *The Ballad of Thomas the Rhymer* and *The Romance of Thomas the Rhymer,* are accounts of what appears to be his own initiation into the arts through a meeting with the Queen of Elfland, who brings him to her world. After a period of service to the queen, he returns with gifts, both inner and outer. Presumably his account is an autobiographical experience of his shamanic initiation into the dark-goddess faery mysteries. He may have been involved in an organized faery witch cult, suggested by the testimony found in the witch trial of Andro Mann in 1598. Thomas Rhymer is available as an inner-planes teacher to those interested in the faery traditions.

Väinämöinen

Väinämöinen is one of the primary figures in the Kalevala, a Finnish epic of magick. He starts out godlike, being born of the water goddess Ilmater under remarkable circumstances. Here Väinämöinen has a role in the creation of the world. His role is magickal, yet his story is filled with very human hopes, dreams, and failings, showing us how the shaman is between both worlds, human and divine, just as we are. He partakes of many adventures with the other figures of the Kalevala, including visiting the land of the dead. He uses song and poetry to do his magick, just as the verses of the Kalevala do. They were compiled from the oral traditions of Finnish mythic songs. Upon the decline of paganism and the rise of Christianity, Väinämöinen departed from this world.

From our history of shamanic witchcraft, we come across other potential ancestors in the shamanic arts less mythic than some of the ones previously listed, including Robert Cochrane, Doreen Valiente, Gwydion Pendderwen, and

Victor Anderson. Our witchcraft ancestors need not be primarily shamanic witches. I look to Scott Cunningham, Gerald Gardner, Leo Martello, Sybil Leek, Lady Sheba, and Alex Sanders.

What about Reincarnation?

If most witches and mystics believe in reincarnation, how can we be calling upon the ancestors? Who do we think is answering our calls? Shouldn't they all be in new bodies, living new lives? Why do we keep bothering them?

I have had strong past-life experiences, retrieving very real memories. When I began to do ancestor work, I wondered about ancestors and reincarnation. If I accept reincarnation as a fact, who lives in the realm of the ancestors? Like so many things, it depends on who you ask.

Witches do not have one universal belief in the afterlife. Themes of the Underworld, the Summerland, and reincarnation are found in many witchcraft traditions, but there is no one dominating belief about the nature of life after death, though most witches believe in reincarnation. How can you call upon the ancestors in the realm of the dead when they are living in a new body? Most practitioners of ancestor reverence don't worry about the paradox. It is an accepted mystery of the craft. But many witches with a mind toward magickal theory and philosophy want to understand this paradox. They have created magickal models of the nature of the soul to explain how an ancestor can be listening to our prayers and rituals and yet reincarnate in a body somewhere on the earth.

To these magickal philosophers, the common idea is that we are multidimensional. We exist in many worlds, on many planes simultaneously. While parts of our energy reincarnate, other parts do not. We all have a higher self and a lower self, both of which exist in realms beyond space and time. No matter where our other selves are—in body or out of body, in the realm of the ancestors or in a different dimension—an aspect of our consciousness is available. When we call upon a person who has passed, we are truly connecting with their higher self, not their deceased personal, ego, middle self. They may manifest with the personality or image of the past middle self, so we recognize them, but it is truly the wisdom of their higher self that comes through to us.

Some think that if the ancestor's spirit has reincarnated, it is not available to hear our calls, but the overall energy of the family, of the entire lineage, is available and will respond to the call of the living. In the otherworld, the ancestry takes on a group power and identity. By honoring many ancestors, you increase the strength of the spiritual family tribe.

Another possibility is that perhaps the individual spirit goes on to a new life, reincarnated, but the imprint of that person, your ancestor, is a part of the cosmic whole. The person is beyond space and time, and always available. As all times are one time, that energy is always available to you. Like the holographic model of the universe (*ITOW,* chapter 7), all parts contain all of the information of the whole. You can connect with the energy of an ancestor regardless of where that individual soul is or what it is doing.

In the end, regardless of the reason, the ancestors listen when you speak. Building a relationship with your roots can be a great asset to your own spiritual growth. Work with the ancestors and ask them yourself.

Ancestor Altars and Offerings

Wiccans create ancestor altars as a part of their reverence. You will find similar, and even more intense, practices of ancestor reverence in the African and Eastern traditions. Most witches reserve the practice for Samhain rituals, decorating either their main ritual altar, or a separate altar, with mementos from the ancestors. Other witches, myself included, keep a small, separate ancestor altar up all year. I believe the ancestors must be cherished year-round, not just on one day. Samhain is important, but I work with the love of the ancestors in other rituals as well. I do find myself drawn more to ancestor work in the waning half of the year, Midsummer to Yule, which is associated with death. In the waxing year they do not weigh as heavily on my mind to be directly evoked.

The purpose of the ancestor altar or shrine is not only to honor the dead who have passed before you, and remember them and their accomplishments, but also to create an energetic link, a touchstone, to the realm. They are your connections in the ancestor realm, and some of your first guides to the Underworld. Many witches feel that their deceased loved ones, particularly grandparents, are their spirit guides in this life. Many traditions of the craft

believe you do not commune with the gods directly, but the ancestors and guides intercede for you, much like the old Catholic notion that you pray to the saints who will beseech God on your behalf. Though I believe direct communion with the gods is not only possible but in some ways preferable, contact with the ancestors is also extremely beneficial. The more allies you have in a realm, the more assured you will be that you are safe and can accomplish your spiritual goals.

The altar creates a strong energetic link to the ancestors. It's not just making the altar but also the time you devote to it that creates the link. The more energy you put into the connection, the more energy the ancestors can put into the connection and help create effective change in your life through wisdom, guidance, and even manifestation. The ancestors are credited with bringing good fortune and beneficial change to the entire family.

Attention must be paid to the altar. Setting it up is an important ritual act in itself, but you must continue to put energy into the link. The initial setup should consist of items that connect you to your known ancestors, including photographs, old jewelry, inherited gifts, and other heirlooms. White or black candles are appropriate. The candlelight is said to guide the spirits' path back to the home when the gates between worlds open on Samhain. I have votives on my altar, and I light them on other days and rituals, not just on Samhain, whenever I want to honor the deceased.

Food is a traditional Samhain offering. Plates of food and glasses filled with the ancestor's favorite drink can be put on the altar for a time. Then they are placed outside in nature. As with offerings to the faery folk, you might ask why the immaterial need food. Food prepared with love and time stores your energy. When you put food on the altar, you are giving of your energy. To the ancient people, food was not wasted, so ritual offerings of food and water were the most sacred offerings to be made. Anything known to be loved by your ancestors—a particular food, drink, candy treat, stone, color, perfume, or anything at all—can be used as an offering of your energy, a way of paying respect to your ancestor connection.

Exercise 20
Ancestor Ritual

Start by building your own ancestor altar. Use your intuition to make something suitable to your forebearers. Place an offering on the altar—anything you feel would be appropriate, from a favorite food or candy to anything else that strikes your fancy. Choose genetic ancestors along with spiritual ancestors and mythic patrons who might have walked the earth.

Create a sacred space by casting your magick circle around the ancestor altar. As the "work" in this magick-circle ritual, recite this spell. Use these words, or let them inspire your own:

> *I, [state your name], ask in the name of the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to continue my relationship with my ancestors, to know the love, support, and guidance of those beyond the veil. I remember and honor my ancestors and ask for their loving presence in my life. I ask for my ancestors' gifts, talents, and blessings to be passed on to me, when the time is appropriate for me. I ask to carry on the torch of my ancestors. As I receive their gifts, I ask to carry the responsibilities of the family. I ask this for the highest good, harming none. So mote it be.*

Release the circle in the usual way. Continue to put time and effort into your ancestor altar and into your relationship with the ancestors.

Journeying with the Ancestors

As the ancestors are spirit guides, Orion Foxwood, author of *The Faery Teachings,* suggests that at least some of the voices heard in the internal mental chatter of initial meditative and magickal training are the voices of our genetic ancestors, speaking to us through the blood. As we order our minds, many voices fall away, while a few remain as ancestor guides, acting as intermediaries to connect with deeper Underworld spirits. They are within us, as well as in the land of the dead.

Rivers of the Underworld that flow and connect our energy can be used as vehicles to connect with the ancestors during a journey. European tradition gives us at least two Underworld rivers—red and white. One is of blood and the other is of either tears or semen. Both relate to the ancestors, our blood and genetic links. Blood has male, martial qualities, but is also linked to the female mysteries of menstruation. White has a lunar, pearly quality of

femininity, but semen relates to male mysteries. Early in his career, the young Merlin prophesied that two dragons, one red and one white, were battling beneath a hill, making the tower that a king was attempting to build unstable. The king dug up the area and found he was correct. The dragon power relates to both the subtle power of land, the ley lines, and the rising twin serpent currents of kundalini, the power of awareness and creation. From the depths of both the Underworld and our lower consciousness rise our life and purpose.

When journeying to the Underworld, seek out the rivers of blood and tears. If you seek to embody a quality or receive a message from your ancestors, follow these lines. Even if you seek spiritual, nongenetic ancestors, the human family leads back to one root. You will find your ancestors along the river. Drinking from the rivers can bring knowledge and talents of past lives to your current life. You can learn about past family issues—instances of abuse or trauma that need to be healed.

Witches are psychopomps, soul guides, who help heal those in body who can heal, and guide the dying to leave the body and enter the next life in peace. If guiding a dying soul to the next life, use the image of the Underworld river. As you journey in your consciousness, create a path for that soul. If the one passing is open to it, you can simultaneously use the image in a guided meditation, taking the soul to the next life via the river. Call upon the deities, angels, and past ancestors to help you.

If the river image is not helpful, other witches use staircases, doorways, or tunnels of light. You can also travel to the ancestors through the inner temple, opening the gateway of ancestors (*ITOW,* chapter 14). The most important step is to create a medium in which to travel, a bridge that will help the consciousness move to the next plane. For nonwitches, descending images might not be comforting, so feel free to use ascending images, such as staircases to heaven. The image is not as important as the energetic connection.

Becoming a Death Walker

Those who resonate with allies from the Underworld and land of the ancestors might find their calling to be a death walker. This is one of the most serious paths of ancestor work. A death walker is one who walks between worlds, this

one and the realm of the dead, helping unite those who have crossed over with their living kin in the middle realm. Popularly thought of as mediumship and channeling, the traditions of the death walkers are found in magickal cultures throughout history. In our modern times they seem to be needed even more, as people become open to the ideas of personal spirituality and yet are fearful that many of our mainstream dogmatic institutions are crumbling or weakening. They don't know where to seek answers about the next life. They have trouble moving on in their personal lives when a loved one passes. The death walker's role is to make an energetic connection, again to be a bridge, between the living and the dead. Through connecting with the deceased, and answering questions and giving information that "proves" the loved one has gone on to another life, in another world, the death walker gives the living family members a personal experience with their own deceased loved ones, proving that life, or consciousness, continues after physical death. They know their loved ones who have passed are still present, offering loving support. They open to a new magickal model of life and reality, and are able to make great healing changes in their lives.

Those who are called to be death walkers do not usually choose the path. The spirits of the ancestors make themselves known. They will teach the skills necessary to make the connection and relay information. Each death walker has a different style, tradition, and technique. Gaining knowledge and training in counseling and grief psychology is an important step for those who seek to be a death walker.

Hauntings

As the ancestors are the spirits of the dead who have crossed over, witches are called in to investigate the spirits of the restless dead, those who have not peacefully crossed over to the next world. As intermediaries between the two worlds, our job is to bring harmony to the natural relationship between the seen and unseen.

Hauntings come in many forms, yet few are truly disembodied spirits trapped in this world. Many people assume that strange energies are automatically the work of ghosts, but there are many disturbances a walker between the worlds will be called upon to remedy.

Etheric Imprints

Many experiences of haunted happenings are not ghosts, but echoes of the past. When strong experiences occur, they imprint their energy in the etheric plane of the area. We pick up these imprints as the "vibes" of a place. Psychically sensitive people intuitively feel something is askew. They can be "good" or "bad" vibes. When they are created from harmful emotions—abuse, fear, anger, and violence—they may be mistaken for a haunting. Simple cleansing techniques using the four elements, such as burning purifying incense or aspersing (sprinkling) with salt and water (*OTOW,* chapter 9), can be used repeatedly to clear the space.

Etheric Recordings

Sometimes the imprints go one step deeper, and not only are the general emotions of a time and place imprinted, but actual events are recorded in the ethers. People report certain "ghosts" repeating the same actions during the same time of day, like walking down a set of stairs. Another etheric recording might be the voices of an argument, where the same argument is repeated cyclically, be it every day, week, or month. Replayed battles from war sites are common, too. Some recordings seem to be timed, while others are "tripped" and played when certain people enter the vicinity. Though these recordings can appear to be ghosts, there is no consciousness or individuality present in the experience. The recordings are like psychic scars in the ethers. They are just echoes recorded onto the etheric plane.

Discordant Energy

If unbalanced, dense energy builds in a location, it can be triggered by strong and violent emotions to create a somewhat haunted effect. Much like the etheric imprints of "bad vibes," the "bad vibes" not only imprint, but remain and grow. The first time I encountered this, it felt like a case of "bad feng shui." As feng shui is the Asian art of balancing the flow of energy in an environment to create peace, health, and prosperity, the flow of the energy was stagnant and thick. Dense energies never cleared out, and simply built up over time. The discordant energy is triggered by unbalanced emotions. It can create a sense of malevolence, of being watched, or even manifestations of minor violence, such as objects falling and breaking randomly. Home-cleansing techniques, traditional and intuitive feng shui techniques, and changing the emotional

environment will do wonders in putting a halt to this situation.

Astral Fragments

Sometimes a haunting is not a fully conscious spirit trapped in the world, but a fragment of the spirit, such as a soul fragment, a shard of the etheric, astral, emotional, or mental body, or the energy of the middle-self ego. Home-cleansing techniques can usually dissipate this energy.

Poltergeists

Though I have never personally worked with a poltergeist case, they appear to be hauntings where physical objects are moved about rather violently. Traditionally such cases usually center on a teenager just entering puberty, and the manifestation is not a spirit, but the energy of this sudden and confusing change in a particularly psychically gifted child. Bringing center and balance to the child usually stills the outbursts.

Disturbed Land Spirits

Hauntings are not always of human origin, but instead are rooted in nature. When land is damaged and disturbed, particularly land that has been held sacred or where magickal rituals have been done, those of the elemental, nature, and faery realms can make their displeasure known. This is not a common occurrence, but as we encroach more and more upon nature, it might become more frequent. Just as a proper relationship with the land can bring a sense of love and harmony to a piece of property and the home on it, an improper relationship can bring difficulties and accidents. Learning to listen to the land, and building a proper partnership with it, is the remedy, and the key to avoiding future problems.

Disembodied Dead

At times, a haunting is a haunting. The spirit of a human being does not cross over for some reason. Some are meek and mellow, afraid of the next step or too lost to find it once they do decide it's time to cross over. Others are angry and do not understand what happened. Many are shackled, imprisoned by their own intense emotions of anger, revenge, fear, and pain. These are the souls that need to be guided to the next realm.

Discarnate Beings

Discarnate beings are those who are not physical, have never been physical, and do not necessarily belong in the Middle World. All manner of mischievous and even malevolent spirits do exist and thrive on causing problems. They are the inspiration for all of our stories of gremlins, imps, and demons. They are more common when people do magick, particularly spirit summoning, without having any real knowledge, background, or training in the tradition. The shamanic practitioner's job is to send such beings back where they belong.

Exercise 21

Clearing a Haunting

Unlike the other exercises in this book, there is no one set protocol for clearing a haunting. Each situation is different, and requires someone who is connected to his or her own inner guidance, spirit allies, and personal power. It's not something to enter into lightly. Hopefully this is information you will never need, but it is always better to have an understanding of the dynamics of a haunting and ideas on how to resolve it if and when you need to do so.

Before entering the area, make sure your own energy is clear. Make sure your own psychic protection shields are fully activated (*ITOW,* chapter 9). Call upon your spirit allies to be present with you, guiding and informing you every step of the way. You will remain open and aware, yet in a state of protection with your psychic shields up. When you enter the area, pay attention to your senses, and determine what the nature of the disturbance is. Is it a true haunting, or something else? I usually get in the middle of the area and count myself into a deeper state of meditation. Then I sit quietly and perceive the energy and listen to my allies.

You can clear the space using home-purification techniques, just as you would banish and clear a space before a ritual, using incense or sacred water or filling the space with light. Banishing pentagrams drawn in light also help clear unwanted energies. In extreme circumstances the entire building can be ringed with consecrated sea salt and/or protection herbs. This will not trap the spirit in the dwelling, but raise the entire area's energy, to dispel any entities to a higher plane.

You can call upon your guides to open a gate between this world and the next, visualized as a pillar of light connecting the heavens to the Underworld.

The pillar of light is like the World Tree. Call upon your guides to help usher the trapped spirits and energies into the pillar, which then transports them up or down to the most appropriate level of consciousness. Sometimes you have to make the pillar gateway as large as the dwelling. Traditional shamans usually return restless spirits to the Lower World, or a more favorable place in the Middle World, where no harm or disruption will occur. I leave such choices to my allies, feeling they know far better than I where a particular spirit belongs.

Using techniques of ritual magick, you can attempt to bind the spirit to an object and then remove the object, but I don't recommend this technique because it doesn't necessarily help the trapped spirit cross over. Some in the heroic shamanic context ask their powerful spirit allies to battle and subdue the offending spirit. Though this method can work, I prefer to start with communication.

Sometimes you simply need to communicate with the spirit, and explain the situation. Spirits can be confused because they don't realize they are dead or understand why they are trapped. As in many situations in life, communication can be the key to overcoming conflict. Once the situation is understood, ghosts will willingly go to the next realm if they can move out of fear and anger. If a ghost is benign yet still stuck, and it doesn't want to leave, you might not be able to force it, nor should you necessarily. If no harm or imbalance is being caused, that entity has a free choice to remain trapped. Only when such entities cause harm to the land of the living do we have a right to force them to leave. Many people have ghosts they "like" and don't want to banish. Personally I would want to make sure the ghost is not stuck and see if it wants help; but if it doesn't, then I would leave it alone.

Another powerful technique is to invoke a deity ruling the realm of the dead to command the spirits to the realm of the ancestors. I only attempt this when other methods have failed. Make sure you have a strong relationship with the Underworld deity before attempting this.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 19–21 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows. Technically all these exercises are optional, based on your own desires and needs.

• Work with your directional spirit wheel to help understand what role a new spirit will take on your team. Continue to use this mandala as you gather more allies.

Continuing Assignments

• Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.

• Practice the Second Attention exercises outlined in chapter 2.

• Continue to build your shamanic tools and witch bag.

• Be mindful of the energies and allies in your life. Develop your spirit relationships.

Tips

• Walking the spirit world is like walking down the street. Just as every person on the street doesn't have a personal message for you, every spirit does not have a message for you either. These beings have their own existences to lead. Don't stop everyone, asking for a message. As in life, look to those whom you are drawn to, and who are drawn to you.

• Never push yourself too far too fast. If some of these techniques are not comfortable for you, understand the information and come back to the experience as you grow more confident. Invocation, ancestor rituals, and hauntings are not for everybody.

• During invocation experiences, it might feel like you are playing pretend as you will yourself to become more like a godform. That's fine. Many people, myself included, experience it that way. Imagination is a path of magick.

• To connect with your ancestors and honor your family, make a family tree. Learn the history and lineage of your family, whether your blood family, adopted family, witch family, or spiritual family. If you desire, use it as part of your ancestor or traditional altar. You can even put a "mini" family tree into your witch bag. Remember and honor your ancestors' birth dates and death dates.

• Remember that the dead are dead and can do little to harm you, even during a haunting. Stand firm in your personal power, and you will be safe.

[contents]

10

Lesson Six
The World of Dreams

Dream working is a fundamental part of shamanic studies. To the shamanic witch, dreams are not just the brain processing our daily stress, but an entire reality, a different life where we interact with the three worlds in new and different ways.

In traditional psychological models, dreams are unconscious. They are the accumulated daily thoughts and stresses working themselves out while your conscious mind and body rest. They are your hopes, dreams, fears, and repressed thoughts “bubbling up” as you sleep. Sometimes they make sense and give you messages. Other times they do not, and seem unimportant. Dreams act as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, what shamans call the middle and lower selves. Though dreams have a psychological component to them, there is so much more to dreams than modern psychology. They open a gate to the spiritual world.

In the shamanic model, the dreaming world is as important as the waking world. The waking world is called the Great Dream, the dream we dream together into a consensus reality. The gods and spirits are sometimes referred to as dreamers, and the Great Spirit is the Great Dreamer. The Great Spirit gives a part of the dream, a part of creation, to the dominion of a specific being. The goddess of the moon is the dreamer of the moon, responsible for that part of creation.

When we go to sleep, we go to other dreaming worlds that are smaller and stranger but no less “real” that the waking world. Some are our personal realities, our private dream worlds, while others intersect with “common ground” in the traditional shamanic worlds above, below, and in the middle. We connect with the little dreamers, the gods and spirits, as well as the dream selves of other humans.

During dreams, most people, shamans or not, work with their spirit guides.

Since most of us do not consciously recognize our spirit allies, the only opportunity we have to partner with them is during sleep. Dreams are a form of shamanic journey. Magickal practitioners know to make the most of this time, and become more clear and conscious in their dreaming life.

Dreams are the way your higher self speaks to you. The lower self is giving you messages from the higher self through symbols found in both your personal consciousness and the collective consciousness. Our other selves speak to us through symbols, though the message can get muddled.

Think of our many levels of awareness like a lake. When we are on the shore, above the water, we are clear and conscious. This is our normal waking life, our ordinary reality. Deep at the bottom of the lake is the nonordinary reality, and the realm of the archetypal beings. This is the place of deep awareness and awakening to true power and reality. This is the collective consciousness, the divine mind. Here are the universal symbols and patterns.

On the surface of the lake is the personal subconscious of everyone. We each have a little spot on the shore, our own personal zone that we dive into when we dream. Your surface might be dark and muddy, or crystal clear, depending on how well you know your own mind. Below the surface is our cultural conditioning and cultural symbolism, based on the time and location of where we live. The cultural symbols of someone living in a modern city in the United States are different from those of someone living in an African desert.

When you dream, your consciousness dives through your personal and cultural waters into the great depths. There you experience the shamanic worlds and work with power beings. The energies and patterns are so vast that they are hard to translate into human experience because they are not physical. Your awareness grasps the archetypal images, and brings those back as you awake. Your awareness must pass through your own cultural and personal zones before arriving back on the shore of waking consciousness. If you have a lot of stuff floating through your subconscious, the collective archetypal images will be draped in your own personal images, like mud when you pass through dirty water.

If you know what is in your subconscious and your cultural conditioning, you can separate them from the collective archetypal images, and even take meaning from why your mind would associate certain personal symbols with your dream messages. There might be a specific message and meaning for

you. If you are unaware of your subconscious, and unaware of mythology and psychological symbolism, your personal symbols and universal archetypes will get jumbled together and make no sense. The more conscious you become, the more you heal the shadow, the clearer your dream life will be. Regular meditation is a powerful complement to dream work, helping clear your consciousness and get in touch with the universal powers. Meditation makes both shamanic journey and dreams clearer and more powerful.

Dream Magick

Dreams can be categorized by the type of experience we have. If you choose to work with each type of dream, magickal techniques for improving your ability to interact with the dream world are included in each category.

Unconscious Dreams

Unconscious and uncontrolled dreams are the most common dreams of humans. These dreams are hard to remember, and seem vague and jumbled. Meaning can rarely be taken from them, and the meaning is not obvious. The symbolic meaning must be decoded, and sometimes it takes outside help to truly understand this message from our unconscious. Sometimes the symbols are universal or cultural, and tools like a dream dictionary can help us. Many people find dream dictionaries unhelpful, though, because they are often biased to a particular culture or way of thinking, and because most of them don't take into account the mystical world of the witch. They are flat and psychological and do not reflect the shamanic reality. In dreams, archetypal symbols are often mixed with personal symbols that mean something only to you, or to your group of family and friends, not to the author of the dream dictionary. If the symbols are not obvious to you, having a friend, family member, or therapist point them out can make the meaning much clearer, if you are ready to hear the message.

Sometimes a dream's meaning is obvious to everyone but us. Other times a dream is just a dream, and may not have a grand message for us. One of the mistakes those new to dream magick make is trying to find deep significance in every nuance of every dream. Sometimes dreams are just experiences and do not need to deliver a life-changing message, just as many meditations and journeys are experiences, but not pivotal ones.

Dream Technique 1: Dream Journal

To become more conscious of your dreams and gain better recall, keep a dream journal. I suggest that you keep a separate notebook on your nightstand. When you wake up in the morning, immediately write down the first things that come to mind, even if they're not part of a dream. Get into the habit of recording your first thoughts of the day. You can copy them into your regular journal or Book of Shadows since your morning handwriting will probably not be very neat. If you can't write early in the morning, get a handheld tape recorder and speak your first thoughts into the device.

Dream Technique 2: Dream Circle

Many people complain that their dreams are filled with images of day-to-day life, including work, home, and family. They feel their mundane thoughts are overriding any mystical experience. To clear the recent subconscious, the surface of the "lake," trace your day backwards from the time you went to bed. Think about what you did just before going to bed, and then review your actions before that. Keep going backwards, in as much detail as you need, until you get to waking up that day. This is called the dream circle, because you are circling backwards. Most people fall asleep before they get to the time of their waking. If you don't, get into greater detail with each action the next time you try this technique. If an interaction with someone during the day is still bothering you, you can perform Exercise 17: Higher-Self Connection to call upon the person's higher self, and speak your piece or make amends if you feel you were in error. Forgive the person and forgive yourself. Let it go. Thank and release the person's higher self, and continue in your cycle backwards. This will clear the events of the day and help you achieve a deeper level of awareness.

Dream Technique 3: Returning to a Dream

If you awaken from a dream before its resolution and feel you were on the verge of experiencing something important, try to continue the dream. You can go back to sleep with the intention of returning to the dream, or you can go to sleep the next night with this intention. I find getting hold of the dream while in the waking state to be most helpful. To do this, stay in bed, and relax into a light meditative state. Do Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State. Retrace the last steps of the dream in your mind, and let it continue in your imagination. Let

your imagination wander. What would have happened? Continue the dream like a meditation, and see where it leads you. Because you are conscious, you can ask questions of the beings you meet and hopefully remember the answers. Go to bed with the intention of remembering and completing your dreams.

Lucid Dreams

The term lucid dreams literally means “clear dreams.” The lucid state refers to a clarity and consciousness that we usually lack in the dream state. You could describe a lucid dream as your mind being awake as your body sleeps. You are aware you are dreaming, and have a certain measure of control over the dream. It can be recalled with greater clarity and feel very real, even though you are aware it is a dream. The term lucid dreaming was coined by a Dutch psychiatrist named Frederik van Eeden, in 1913, in a paper published by the Society for Psychical Research, of which van Eeden was a member. Though this is a universal experience in almost every culture, he was the first to bring it to the attention of modern academics.

People ask me how to have lucid dreams, but aren’t sure why they want to have them, beyond “it sounds cool.” Some want to have clear visualization experiences because they visualize in their dreams but have difficulties during meditations. One purpose of lucid dreaming is to condition your consciousness to remain alert and aware at deep levels of nonordinary reality. Lucid dreams prepare you for deeper journeys, and eventually the experience of crossing from this life to another consciously during the death process. The other main purpose of lucid dreaming is to work on manifestation abilities. In the dream world, the time lapse between having a thought and making it a reality is very short. Unlike the physical world, where you can send out a spell and it may take days, weeks, or months to manifest, in the dream world this process is practically instantaneous. Here we learn the power of our thoughts, good and bad, and how to clear and control our unwanted thoughts before they manifest. In a lucid dream, we can consciously create inner magickal changes and healing.

Dream Technique 4: Lucid-Dream Trigger

You can awaken your consciousness and not your body in a dream through the use of a self-hypnotic trigger. Use your instant-magick trigger (*ITOW,* exercise 12) or a light meditative state, and suggest to yourself that when you see a

particular image (choose an unusual image), it will “shock” you “awake” to the fact that you are dreaming. Then affirm that you will see this image in your dreams tonight and it will trigger your lucid dream. Pick something you never dream of. Many of my dreams are in old primordial forests, with lots of pine, oak, ash, hemlock, and birch trees. My symbol to trigger a lucid dream is a palm tree, because unless I do this technique, I never dream of palm trees, and palm trees would be very out of place in my forest. So when I dream and stumble upon a palm tree surrounded by oaks, I realize I’m dreaming and can take control of the dream. If the first image you pick doesn’t work, continue to experiment with different images to act as a trigger. Use the same image for as long as it works, and then find something new. I have a friend whose trigger image is a pink Easter bunny. That works too. I don’t suggest triggering lucid dreams every night because doing so might leave you very tired in your waking life.

Dream Technique 5: Alarm Trigger

Lucid dreams occur as we are passing through REM sleep, before we awaken. Try setting a snooze alarm a half hour before you have to get up. When the alarm first goes off, press the snooze button and go back to sleep. Now that you are passing in and out of consciousness, you are more likely to keep a part of yourself conscious and awake in the dream, and remember it clearly when you awaken. Some people find this technique extremely tiring, so experiment with it to find if it works for you.

Spirit Dreams

Dreams are one of the primary ways we work with our spirit allies, guides, and totems. Most of us don’t enter nonordinary reality while awake, so this is the only time our spirits have with us. When we become conscious of our spirits, we can place our intentions into those relationships and receive dreams that can give us information, solve our problems, and heal us on the emotional, mental, and physical planes. Many pantheons have gods that rule the dream world. In the Greek tradition, Morpheus is the god of dreams, while Hypnos is the god of sleep. The dream world holds two gates, one of horn and one of ivory. Dreams that pass through the Gate of Ivory are false and illusionary, while dreams that pass through the Gate of Horn are true and valuable. Calling upon the dream gods can be helpful in sorting out your dreams.

Dream Technique 6: Evoking Spirits

Simply call upon your spirit guides and guardians to aid you while you sleep. I usually ask my guides to protect me on all levels while I sleep and dream. If I have a specific intention, I might ask my spirit guides and higher self to help me fulfill it while I sleep. When feeling physically ill or emotionally upset about something, I will go to sleep and ask my guides to help heal me while I sleep. If you have a specific kind of dream you would like to experience, or if you want to visit a particular place or learn something, ask your spirits to help you do it. Before falling asleep, you can do a meditation in bed and ask to visit your inner temple. While in the inner temple, ask to go to and open the gateway of dreams (*ITOW,* chapter 14). Place your intention into the gateway of dreams, calling upon your spirit guides in the temple to help you. Go into the gateway and let yourself fall asleep. You will notice that your dreams are more vivid and purposeful when you wake up the next morning.

Dream Technique 7: Dream Spells

If you have a question or problem, and have sought guidance, and are not getting clear messages any other way, try a dream spell. In the format of a spell, write down your question and your intention to have it solved. You could try something like this:

> *I, [state your name], ask in the name of the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit to understand the recent problems at work and make the right decision for myself and the highest good. So mote it be.*

Read the paper at bedtime, fold it up, and put it under your pillow. When you wake up, record your memories in your dream journal, and your question just might be answered and your problem solved.

Dream Technique 8: Time-Out

If you find yourself physically getting enough rest but always feeling tired, try this technique. Your spirits may be working with you “too much” and not be aware of the rigors of physical life. You need to set some guidelines, since sleep is also meant to be rejuvenating. Before going to bed, simply but firmly say to your guides, silently or out loud:

> *Tonight I wish to sleep peacefully and rejuvenate my mind, emotions, body, and soul. I wish to stay in this world, in this body and simply rest.*

Give yourself a break. Don't do this every night, since dream work is an essential part of your life, but do take a time-out when needed.

Group Dreams

Some people share dreams with close friends and family members spontaneously. They dream about each other simultaneously, and share similar, if not exact, dream themes and images. This supports the shamanic belief that dreams are not solely an internal unfolding of the consciousness, but a shared realm where many travel and gather. Some metaphysicians believe the dream plane and parts of the shamanic plane are what others call the astral plane. The astral plane is a shared collective space where energy easily takes the shape and form of our thoughts, emotions, and will. In the dream state, the astral "matter" takes the shape of images in our mind. We can think of it like a layer of water in our dream-lake analogy. Here many people can come and "swim" together. It's not uncommon for romantic partners, teachers and students, or healers and clients to dream of each other. Though it can happen spontaneously, it can also be done consciously with intention.

Dream Technique 9: Creating Group Consciousness

Learning to dream intentionally with another person or group is a powerful technique used to create group consciousness. It creates an opportunity to share spiritual and magickal energy, work out issues, and forge a psychic intimacy. Covens do group meditations and group dreams to forge a stronger unit. To do this, those involved must all agree to be asleep at the same time. You can ritualize the process with the dream spell technique (dream technique 7), holding the intention that you will join your group on the dream/astral plane. Any other intentions for the group can be set with the dream spell. I've had success doing a group meditation together first and, through the guidance of a meditation leader who is also meditating, creating a shared astral temple or meeting spot (*OTOW,* exercise 37). While in meditation, the group creates together a shared common image, and then focuses upon that image when going to sleep, using it as a psychic meeting place.

Dream Technique 10: Sending Dreams

Two people don't have to decide simultaneously to connect through a dream. One person can send a dream message to another. Witches and shamans are

known to send messages to others through their dreams. Though a powerful and fun technique, it's not something to be trifled with and done indiscriminately, particularly if the recipient is not normally open or aware of such phenomena. I've only used this technique to get into contact with people whom I cannot contact by phone, computer, or mail. Think of your message in the simplest terms possible. When you go to sleep, focus on the person to whom you wish to send the dream, and the message. Hold the intention as you fall asleep. If this is hard for you, you can do it as a dream spell (dream technique 7) or do a meditation to the gateway of dreams in the inner temple (dream technique 6).

Nightmares

Nightmares can reflect inner conflict. On a purely physical level, they reflect physical conflict, of one body system over another struggling for energy when you are sick or have eaten too late in the day. Illness reflects the inner mental and emotional struggles played out in the body, and nightmares can be a reflection of our subconscious issues. They manifest when one is ill physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Those who are called to the shamanic path will occasionally experience periods of nightmares or fevered illnesses inducing strange visions. These nightmares can be part of healing the shadow, a warning, or a part of the shaman's initiation process.

On another level, nightmares are the repressed angers, fears, and other conflicting emotions that fuel the shadow coming to the surface when you are not consciously in control and are repressing them. It's an opportunity to get in touch with these energies. Continued nightmares are also a potential symptom of psychic attack, but even if this is so, attracting such a conflict to your life reflects an inner conflict. The inner world parallels the outer world. Resolve the inner conflict, and such outside attacks will be rendered impotent. Such nightmarish conflicts are seen as the interference of unwanted spirits attached to our psyche. To some, they are psychological representations of past trauma. To others, they are independent spirits attracted by our traumas, moving through the individual and collective consciousness.

In an obscure form of shamanism in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, first brought to my attention through a book entitled *The Master of Lucid Dreams,* the focus is to use dreams to heal memories from the "spirits of trauma," or "memory

demons."Russian psychologist Olga Kharitidi, M.D., recounts her adventures in Samarkand learning this wisdom. In the book, her teacher, Michael, explains this view on dreams (pp. 167–169):

> The major task for our dreams is to fill in the gaps in our memory. The problem is that when the memory demons have populated your memory already, they will do everything to protect their existence. The problem is that they are much more alive, active, and powerful in dream than in waking life. So, unfortunately, when the dream space is not clear, quite often instead of healing, the dreams bring an intensification of the hurt of the trauma. To beat them up, the memory demons, you have to be equipped with the knowledge that can allow you to work inside the dream. It's worth the effort, since complete healing happens through changing the structure of the images, not simply their meanings. That is easier to do through working with dreams.

Dream Technique 11: Dream Charms

All the techniques and previous types of dreams can be used to heal our nightmares, soothe our traumas, and create a space to heal and transform our dreams. Dream charms are magickal devices used to enhance our dream experience. The dream-spell intentions are a form of dream charm. Now, by adding symbol, herb, or stone, we can add the powers of nature and shape to our dream magick. The following sections are lists of popular stones and herbs that can help in dream magick.

Dream Stones

Aquamarine
Beryl
Blue aragonite
Blue calcite
Clear quartz
Herkimer diamond
Labradorite/Spectrolite
Moonstone
Mother of pearl
Opal

Pearl
Red jasper
Rhodochrosite
Selenite
Silver
Sugilite

Dream Herbs

The following dream herbs are to be used for spell work, and not ingested.

Apple leaf and blossom
Chamomile
Catnip
Comfrey
Elder
Eucalyptus
Heather
Jasmine
Lemon
Lemon balm
Lilac
Lily
Lily of the valley
May flowers
Mugwort
Myrrh
Orris root
Rose
Sage
Sandalwood
Vanilla
Valerian

Dream Bowl

Dream bowls are one of my favorite charms for working in this realm. They are long-term charms to improve the quality of your dream work. On the new moon, take a clear glass or crystal bowl without any writing or markings on it.

Ritually cleanse it, and fill it halfway with pure water. Choose one dream stone from the previous list. Cleanse it, and put it in the center of the bowl. I like Herkimer diamonds or clear-quartz points the best. Herkimer diamonds are very small, clear, double-terminated quartz points. The two points of this crystal help facilitate astral/dream projection. The symbolism in the two points of a double-terminated crystal demonstrates that this stone helps energy project both ways, both in and out, and can be used to aid the astral self in leaving and returning to the body.

Take one tablespoon of three dream herbs, charge them for clear, spiritual, healing dreams, and sprinkle them into the water. I like to use a mixture of valerian, chamomile, and mugwort. Put the bowl under your bed. If you have animals that will drink from the bowl, make sure you choose nontoxic, benign herbs, or keep it covered. Cats will react to valerian like a high-intensity catnip. If you have a partner, and only you choose to do dream work, keep the bowl under your side of the bed. Keep it there for a full cycle of the moon. At the next new moon, take out any stones and pour the water and herbs out on the earth. Cleanse the stones and bowl. I won't use the dream bowl for two months in a row—it gets tiring! I skip months in between and only use it when I really need to work on my dreams. Use it all the time only if you are truly called to do constant dream work.

Dream Pillow

A witch's dream pillow is usually a small sachet of herbs used to induce peace and rest. In a shamanic context, you can put any dream-magick intention into a pillow, particularly for healing or spirit dreams. The filler for the dream pillow can be rice, cotton, or old cloth, to make the pillow softer. The smaller dream pillow is kept by or inside the actual bed pillow or is hung somewhere near the bed. Some are the size of eye pillows. Use flax, fennel, or anise seed as the filler. Rarely is a dream pillow the size of an actual bed pillow. Choose from the herbs in the previous list to make your own dream pillow. My favorite recipe includes the following:

5 parts white rice (to fill)
3 parts lavender flowers and/or leaves
2 parts rose petals
9 drops vanilla or lavender oil (use more if you desire and your measurement

part is more than a tablespoon)

If you can find a small, rounded crystal to use in the center of the pillow, and its hardness won't bother you, you can add stone magick to your pillow. Dream pillows are usually kept until their scent is no longer apparent, and then dismantled. The herbs are returned to the earth, and the pillow is refilled with fresh magickal herbs.

Dream Tea

Herbal preparations can not only help us get to sleep, but also improve the quality of our dream life and dream magick. Most relaxing and sedative herbs are nervines, and great care should be taken with using most of them, particularly if you are on any mood-altering medication. Always check the toxicity and medicinal interactions of herbs with a reliable medicinal herbal book or qualified herbalist before taking any internally.

The following is a gentle recipe of moon- and dream-related herbs. When you mix the herbs together, charge each one with your intention of dream magick. You can use this tea for a dream spell, to ease nightmares, to get rest, or to perform lucid or prophetic dreams. Mix one tablespoon of herbs into one cup of boiling water. Let it steep for five to ten minutes covered, and drink with a bit of honey a half hour before your bedtime ritual.

3 parts lemon balm
2 parts lemon peel
½ part mugwort *(Contact with mugwort may cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating. Large doses may be toxic.)*

You can make a large batch of dry herbs and store it in an airtight container with your magickal intention. Then make a fresh cup of tea whenever you need it.

Amulet for Protection from Nightmares

A college friend of mine was having horrible nightmares. Her first witch friend created a charm for her out of a simple pair of earrings, to protect her from her nightmares. He simply cleansed and blessed a pair of silver stud earrings, since silver is the metal of the moon and dreams, and charged them in a ritual circle to neutralize and heal her dreams. She wore the earrings to bed, and her nightmares ended. When the charm worked, she began to study witchcraft

herself. You can do this spell too, using earrings, a ring, necklace, bracelet, or any simple piece of metal that can be worn at bedtime.

Dream Cross

In Dr. Kharitidi's work, she was taught to use the swastika as a healing charm to clear the space of her dreams. Although many feel the swastika was perverted by the Nazis in the twentieth century by reversing and tilting it, it was originally a very healing and protective symbol found in both Eastern and Western magick. Norse traditions associate it with the solar wheel or solar cross (Figure 29). By blessing a charm with this symbol, even a simple piece of paper, and putting it under your pillow or bed, you will help clear your dreams and heal the spirits of trauma. The healing tradition practiced by Dr. Kharitidi associated the spirits of trauma with depression, anxiety, and many other problems. By removing the trauma spirits through healing dream work, we can heal these problems. The symbol will not banish your dreams, but help you confront and clear the nightmarish spirits. It will give you release and eventual healing, but it will not be an easy, quick fix. For now, you may want to reserve this technique until you start working to directly distill the shadow self near the end of this year and a day (chapter 15). You do not have to have a specific memory or trauma in mind that you want to heal. The solar cross will clear the space in your dreams that is most appropriate at this time, as determined by your higher self, not your conscious self. If the symbol itself is not palatable to you, I still urge you to try it, but if you cannot, find another symbol you feel is appropriately healing, or design your own symbol with this intention (*OTOW*, chapter 13).

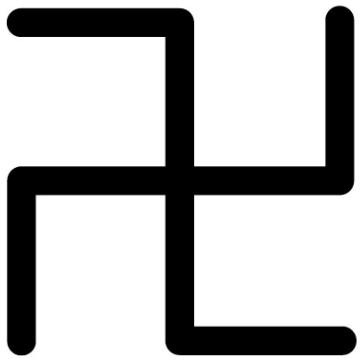


Figure 29: *Healing Solar Cross*

Prophetic Dreams

The dreams most people want to learn about are prophetic dreams, dreams that tell the future. The wise ones of a culture are known for listening to the omens and portents found in dreams for personal and community prophecy. I was told by one South American shaman that they are referred to as “big dreams,” meaning they have greater significance than our daily “little” dreams. They feel different. They hold a greater sense of importance upon waking. Think of them as warning calls from the higher self. Not all shamans or witches have them, but those that do value them greatly. Others curse these dreams, not wanting the insight into the future.

Some prophetic dreams reveal themselves literally in their imagery. What you see is what will happen. Others are much more symbolic. Though you can program your dreams through intention, meditation, and spells, there is no surefire way to ensure prophetic dreams. Most people feel they happen when and if they need to happen. A potential witch or shaman can be called to the path through a dream. Not understanding the dream, the person seeks out another to interpret the dream, usually a witch or shaman. This mystical practitioner tells the dreamer that she is being called to the path of magick and begins to train this new student. Sometimes the dream is ignored and the future practitioner falls ill, and only another can diagnose and treat this mysterious illness of the spirit.

The challenge with prophetic dreams is determining if they are truly prophetic and learning how to benefit from them. It can be hard to tell the difference between a prophetic dream and an unconscious fear or desire. Many witches assume all their dreams are prophetic, and all the messages are for the community or for someone else. In reality they fail to see the personal message for themselves. If you find that you have many unsolicited messages for others and few for yourself, it’s time to reexamine your spiritual work.

Dream Technique 12: Neutralizing Big Dreams

Prophetic dreams usually are warnings that come to show you the possibility of something unfortunate and give you the opportunity to change it. Here is where it can be difficult to tell a fear from a prophecy; but in the end, if you neutralize the potentially harmful outcome, the dream served its purpose. Just as unwanted thoughts and images in your conscious mind can be neutralized (*ITOW,* chapter 8), dreams can be neutralized as well. South American

shamans neutralize these unwanted effects by acting out their big dreams. By ritually acting out the harmful event with the intention of neutralizing it, you rob the potential event from building psychic energy. Mystics believe that something occurs on the astral (dream) plane before it manifests on the physical plane. So your difficulties are building on this astral plane, waiting to manifest, to precipitate down like a storm cloud into the physical world. If you act it out in the physical world with this intention, you are robbing the growing astral "storm" of its energy, making a light shower, rather than a thunderstorm, in your life.

For example, I had a recurring dream that I got into a car accident and was severely injured. It felt different from my other dreams. It felt looming. Was it a prophetic dream or a fear? I'm not sure, and I didn't care in the end. I just wanted to be safe. So my mother and I acted out a make-believe car accident. We replicated how the other car, played by my mother, would hit me. I re-created as much of the dream as I could. Ideally this should be done on the waning moon, but I think we did it on the waxing moon because it felt important to do it immediately. I just held the intention of neutralizing it. Afterward, I never had that dream or fear again. When in doubt, neutralize the dream with the intention of the "highest good, harming none." If you "need" to experience something difficult, based on your higher self, then your neutralization will not negate it, but may minimize the trauma.

Ultimately in working through our dreams, we prepare ourselves for a whole host of nonordinary realities. The clearing, healing, and learning dreams will help you develop the skills to heal deeply in your later shadow work. In the Samarkand shamanic tradition, lucid dreams and dream healing are eventually used to prepare for the ultimate trauma, the trauma and crossing of death. All shamans eventually face their mortality and learn to overcome their sense of separation. Through the dream state, we come closest to the state of awareness of crossing over. Many mystical books, such as the Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the Dead, give detailed instructions to prepare souls for the journey to the next world. Dreams give us practical experiences, not just dry text. By becoming more conscious of our dreams, we heal our fears of death and separation.

Exercise 22

Dream Ritual

Choose and perform one or more of the techniques in this chapter to work more consciously in the dream world. Find what works best for you. Continue to explore the dream techniques over the course of this year and a day. They shouldn't be done every night. Give yourself some time off in between, but do work with them consistently. They will greatly improve your ability to function in the other worlds and will prepare you to heal your shadow self. Record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

New Assignments

- Do exercise 22 and record your experience in your Book of Shadows.
- If you don't keep a dream journal already, start one. Pay attention to the cycles and signs of the moon, and see if you can find specific periods where your dream life is more active and memorable. Even if you don't remember your dreams, get into the habit of trying to recall them. For this year and a day, be vigilant in keeping your dream journal, even if on most days you write something like, "I don't remember a dream this morning." Eventually you will remember your dreams when you need to do dream work.

Continuing Assignments

- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Continue to build your shamanic tools and witch bag.
- Be mindful of the energies and allies in your life. Develop your spirit relationships.

Tips

- Pay particular attention to your dreams a few days after a shamanic journey. Sometimes more information will come out in your dreams, making your shamanic journeys clearer.
- Dream work goes in spurts and cycles. Though it's good to get into the habit of dream awareness, don't feel you have to remember every dream. Once you gain the skills to remember dreams, you will remember the

important ones. I usually have periods of several days, weeks, or an entire month of intense dream work, and then nothing major for several months afterward.

• Pay attention to your dream imagery. Pay particular attention if your dreams have mythic themes or involve deities, spirits, angels, faeries, animals, plants, crystals, or people and places you know. Those images usually signal more important dreams. As you learn more about the symbols and spirits, the meanings will become clearer to you.

• When trying to decipher dreams, look at patterns over a longer cycle, such as a moon cycle or solar month. If individual dreams seem strange and do not make sense, look at the overall patterns. You might not understand the dreams, but you may notice, for example, that you have several dreams with a strong, fierce mother figure. Or you may have several dreams involving the same theme. That theme may be the key to understanding the message, pattern, or experience.

• Folk wisdom tells us about different “dreams” when sleeping under particular trees. Hawthorn gives access to the faery realm. Elder brings us to the Goddess of the Underworld. Hazel answers questions, and apple reveals future loves. Explore dreaming under the branches of trees, if you are able.

• Some dreams aren’t significant. In fact, many dreams won’t make sense to you and don’t appear to have any deep meaning. Pay attention to your dreams, but don’t drive yourself crazy trying to find deep meaning in every single one.

[contents]

11

Lesson Seven
Rites of the Shaman

Ritual is the technology that allows people to interact with the spirit worlds. The tribal shaman is not only counselor, healer, and problem solver, but also ceremonial leader, guiding the tribe in the rites of life and the seasons. Ceremonies are the way the rest of the tribe, less inclined to direct spirit communication and journey, partake in the energies of the spirits. Ceremonies, festivals, and mystery rites open the world of the unknown to the entire population. The shaman acts as guardian of the gateway, creating the rituals that open the experience, guide it, and ultimately end it so others can return to ordinary consciousness. Even if one is not versed in the ways of spirit, these rites allow a tribe or clan member to better understand, respect, and honor the delicate relationship between the worlds. Modern witches now fulfill this role with public rituals and open circles. Witches and nonwitches alike come together to celebrate the Wheel of the Year.

Journeying the Wheel of the Year

To the witch, the eight seasonal festivals, or sabbats, are the centering points of the tradition (Figure 30). Here pagans from many different traditions and groups come together in celebration. Even when we perform different types of rituals, at different times and locations, the edges of our circles reach across both space and time, uniting us with our sisters and brothers. We are connected to those living traditions of shamanism, because many aboriginal traditions, and their modern interpretations, celebrate the movement of the sun at the solstices and equinoxes. Through these sacred days, we can see our similarities and honor our differences.

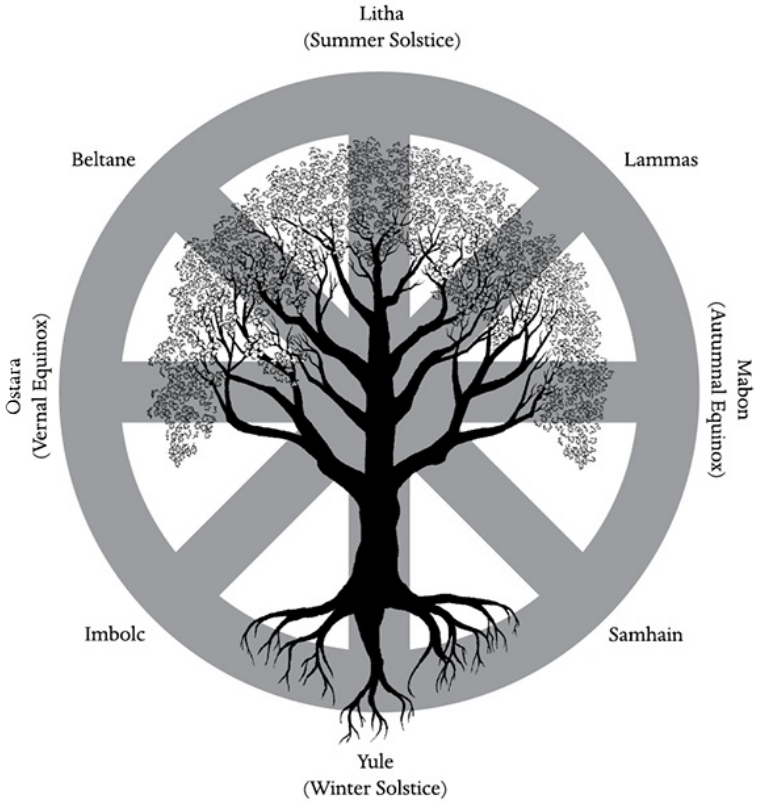


Figure 30: *The Wheel of the Year and the World Tree*

As with the tribal rites, many pagans have no great aspirations for mystical vocation. They perform ritual and work magick, but are not necessarily called to be a healer, seer, or mystic as a life path. The pagan worldview simply fits their own beliefs best, and has become their paradigm but not necessarily their vocation.

Those of us who are called to this path as a spiritual vocation can transcend the traditional feastlike celebrations by working in a more shamanic context during the holidays. The stories of medieval witches gathering at the sabbats show the shamanic history of these holidays in our tradition. In fact, the whole yearly journey of the Wheel, the death and rebirth of the gods, is a story of the shamanic descent on the grandest scale.

Most pagan celebrations involve song, dance, and food. The shamanic witch does not exclude such festivities in ritual because music, dance, and food are powerful ritual tools. They can induce altered states of consciousness and raise energy. Sometimes they are done simply for pleasure. That is wonderful, but there is a deeper purpose. Many talk of turning the Wheel of the Year, but few really believe we are a part of the process. We must not only celebrate

and mark the passage of time, but also direct our energies to the other world to ensure the change of seasons. We are needed to turn the Wheel, from this side of the veil, just as our spirit allies turn it from the other side. We are partners with the Wheel, and raise energy to make the next turn and keep the cycle, the balance, in harmony.

In our rituals, we look to the mythology already present in the Wheel of the Year to inspire a deeper level of awareness and understanding. You can do a shamanic journey as part of a main ritual with others, or do your own shorter celebration and journey, either solitary or prior to joining with a larger group. Don't let shamanic work cut you off from your community unless you choose to be exclusively solitary. I usually do a journey prior to the larger celebrations I lead. This prepares me for the larger group and gives me a focus and theme, though I encourage a shamanic experience in these larger rituals with drumming, meditation, and energy work. The public group that I lead in the Boston area is very shamanic in nature, and we celebrate together through exploring the spirit worlds.

The Wheel is filled with shamanic mysteries. It is all about life and death, and the journey from one realm to the other. By meditating at these times, gateways of awareness and healing open. I've been amazed at the personal revelations that have come to me during a Wheel of the Year journey, when during other journeys the answer remained elusive. As the energies align, these peak times open the gates and provide us with the power to be propelled right through them into a new way of understanding ourselves and the world. I've seen miraculous healing on the emotional and physical levels during Samhain and Yule celebrations, as we face the dark. When we heal, we help heal the world and provide more energy for the Wheel to turn.

Let's look at the holidays of the Wheel of the Year through a shamanic lens. Each holiday provides themes for our personal journeying, and themes to bring to community gatherings. By examining the roles, struggles, and joys of the Goddess and God in the Wheel, you can find your own roles in your life in the Middle World and in your journeys to the Upper and Lower Worlds. Through these journeys, we not only observe and honor the changes of the seasons and cycles, but also directly participate in them. Such journeys are an excellent way of finding new allies and deepening your relationships with the ones you already know.

Yule

Although Yule marks the start of the waxing year, shamanic rituals at this time of year can still be focused on the Underworld. The winter solstice is the longest night of the year, when the young child of light is born. The dominant shamanic image of this day is the womb of the Goddess, like the void or abyss, where all potentials are possible. Shamanic witches are much like spiritual midwives. On this day, ask yourself what you are bringing into form for the next year. What are you giving birth to, for the good of your tribe? What is your community creating? What is being born, and how can you nurture its birth? Perhaps you are not the midwife, but the child being born. What aspect of yourself is being renewed? Classically this is the battle between the young and old kings of Oak and Holly. Is your dark side of anger, depression, or fear now losing to your lighter side of love and healing? Journey to find the meaning of Yule in the otherworld.

Imbolc

Imbolc is a festival of lights, when pagans seek to awaken the slumbering Goddess to rise for the coming spring. The imagery of Imbolc is gentle—milk, candles, corn dollies, beds, etc. During Imbolc journeys you can travel to the slumbering Goddess residing in the Underworld, bringing light to the darkness to awaken her. I use this journey for self-nurturing, healing, and revitalization. Many times in our community roles we don't take time out for ourselves and our own healing and comfort. I journey to the Underworld to slumber with the Goddess for a time and enjoy the last bits of darkness before the coming spring. Ask yourself if you are being called to nurture or to be nurtured at this time.

Ostara

The shamanic theme of Ostara is resurrection. As the Goddess rises from her slumber, the land is resurrected. Flowers rise to greet her, and the land is revitalized after a long winter. Shamanic initiation goes hand in hand with resurrection themes, when the shaman undergoes a spiritual death, and the Goddess of Life and Death resurrects the seeker. Ostara can mark the beginning or end of a period of training, culminating in a rebirth process. Ostara is the time of planting seeds. Seeds can be literal or metaphoric. What

seeds are you planting? What long-term goals do you have? What community goals are you working toward? Which shamanic allies can help you achieve your goals? What can you bring to the Underworld to plant for the future? How can you use your dense energy as "fertilizer" for your new hopes and dreams? You can travel to the Upper World to connect with the solar deities who are warming and nurturing the earth. Seek your resurrection and plan your future at Ostara.

Beltane

The shamanic images of Beltane are not as apparent as those of other holidays. Its theme is bringing together the Upper and Lower Worlds in the Middle World. At Beltane, the Goddess and God come together in union. The May pole reaches down from the heavens and moves deep into the earth. Rituals of enjoyment and physical pleasure all happen in the Middle World. Shamanic journeys on Beltane can involve working in the Middle World, revitalizing the land and your body. How are you rooted in the physical world? How do you enjoy the land and your body? How do you feel about pleasure and sexuality? How can you bring union between the Upper and Lower Worlds? Use morning dew that has collected on Beltane to bathe your eyes and/or brow chakra to increase psychic sight and the ability to see faeries. I've used it as a base for healing potions to great effect. Beltane dew is quite powerful. Lying down in an open field filled with dew in the early morning is a great setting for your Beltane journey.

Litha

Litha, the celebration of the summer solstice, is ripe with shamanic themes. On this day of the longest twilight, the gates between the worlds are naturally open, particularly to the realm of the faery folk. Making contact with faery allies is quite powerful on this holiday. The summer solstice is the peak of solar energy and the height of earthly energy in the growing cycles. At Midsummer, as at Yule, the Oak and Holly Kings battle, but on this day the long shadow of the Holly King rules. Today shamanic witches can seek out their own shadows and glean wisdom on the path to understanding the dark side of their own selves. Ask yourself, how strongly am I connected with my otherworldly allies? Have I been respecting the faeries? Should I journey to the sun or earth deities? Have I been ignoring or neglecting my shadow? Answer these

questions, and you will know the mysteries of Litha.

Lammas

At Lammas, we celebrate the death of the grain and sun god. As the first grains are cut, the God is sacrificed. If journeying on this holiday, visit with the sacrificed grain god before he begins his journey to the Underworld. What wisdom can he grant you for your own journey into death? You may accompany him into the realm of the dead. As the God has sacrificed himself on this day for the survival of the tribe, ask yourself what you must sacrifice for the good of your tribe. What must you release or give for the highest good? Lammas is the first harvest. What must you gather at this time? Have the seeds that you planted at Ostara paid off? Do you need to give them any extra attention?

Mabon

At the celebration of the autumnal equinox, the gates between the worlds are growing wider by the day. As more of the foliage dies, more life force retreats to the realm below. The God is on his journey to the Underworld, to await his rebirth. Your journey can be to accompany the God on his journey, learning his mysteries. The Goddess is also withdrawing her energy at this time, returning to the Underworld, so you might accompany her as well in her mourning phase. Mabon is traditionally a pagan thanksgiving of sorts, where we recognize the second harvest, the fruit harvest, and acknowledge what we have to be thankful for. Do a journey as a way of giving thanks and giving back. Ask your guides what needs to be done for the world's highest good. What task can express your thanks and give back to the community? What journey will help you explore the mysteries of life and death?

Samhain

Samhain is the most shamanic of the eight holidays. On this day the veil between the worlds is the thinnest. On this day we celebrate the ancestors and the coming new year. At Samhain, the energy of life retreats back into the Underworld for rest and rejuvenation and to await rebirth. We celebrate with the Goddess and God in their aspects of Queen and King of the Underworld. In Celtic myth, the Morrighan and the Dagda mate at the river, renewing the cycle of life and death. As the sun is in Scorpio, it is a time of sex, death, and

rebirth. Psychic abilities are stimulated in this sign. Traditional work on Samhain is divination, and our shamanic journeys can be to divine answers to questions about the coming year. Instead of gazing into a crystal, journey into the Underworld and gaze in the still waters of the lakes below. Ask yourself questions about your future and the future of your community. What do you seek to transform? What do you need to let die and be reborn? Seek out the mysteries of Samhain in the Underworld. Visit with the ancestors. Seek out the Goddess and God by the Underworld river.

Exercise 23

Journeying the Wheel of the Year

On your next sabbat, incorporate a shamanic journey into your celebration. Meditate on the theme of the holiday, and allow the journey to take you where you need to go for your own spiritual insight and transformation.

Try to incorporate shamanic journey into your sabbat rituals, or do journeys near the sabbat day itself, to incorporate its energy into your journey. If possible, try to journey for all eight sabbats in the course of a year, and look over your observations to see the larger pattern of your journeys and messages. By looking at the larger pattern, you will gain a greater understanding of the entire Wheel.

Seasonal Spirits

The Wheel of the Year is not only a story of the changing Goddess and God, it is also a journey through the changing seasons. As we believe that all things carry vital life force, that all things are alive and have a measure of consciousness, so too do the seasons.

Like people, some seasons we relate well to, while others are more difficult. Some we even dread, almost making enemies between ourselves and the spirit of the season. In living a life of balance, we need to relate to the whole Wheel, and all four seasons as they manifest in our environment. Each is necessary and a part of life. Each is a part of the elements and the cycles of life on this side of the veil. When approached properly, the spirits of the seasons are great allies. Each manifests as a personality, with wisdom and advice to share, and work to do to bring balance.

While delving into deeper shamanic studies, my student Victoria suggested that our class work with the spirits of the season. It was near the winter solstice, and we each journeyed to encounter the spirit of winter. The purpose of the journey was to receive a ritual from the spirit of winter, to bring greater balance in our relationship with it. I met the archetypical Jack Frost, or Old Man Winter. He was gruff and tough to me. I didn't particularly like winter, after living all my life in New England, and he felt the same way about me and let me know it. I apologized and recognized the gifts he had given to me. During my entire life I had never had any accidents or injuries on the winter ice. I thanked him for that gift. I thanked him for the beautiful snow, my days off from school and work, and my fun times sledding and building snowmen. "Jack Frost" warmed up to me. I then asked him for a ritual, which he gave me. He asked me to go out to the ice frozen by my door and, with a pin, prick my finger and release one drop of blood onto the ice. I thought it was crazy, but that's what he asked for, so I agreed. When we came back from the journey, I was very surprised to find out that another classmate, Carin, received the same ritual. We both really connected to the spirit of winter.

I put off the pin pricking several times, but finally did it. It changed my relationship with winter and ice. Now I no longer get upset if I'm stuck in traffic or have to cancel something because of snow. Snow is needed where I live to maintain the balance of life. Any inconvenience caused by the weather means little, and might actually be a blessing. I no longer get depressed during the cold months. I no longer waste energy being upset with snow, shoveling, and the winter weather. I just enjoy it while I wait for spring.

Exercise 24

Meeting the Spirits of the Seasons

Do a journey to meet the spirits of the seasons. You can choose the season you are in, or wait until you are close to the next shifting seasonal celebration. The spirits of the seasons can be sought out during the Wheel of the Year holidays. Even though Yule marks the waxing year, the spirit of winter is appropriate at this time. Ostara is the time for the spirit of spring. Litha calls for the spirit of summer, and Mabon resonates with the spirit of fall.

Journey to the seasonal spirit, and see where it takes you. Ask your totem

guide for help. Will you travel the Lower, Upper, or Middle World? Follow your intuition and guidance. If it is a season you don't normally enjoy, seek to understand why, and how to make inner peace with the season. The seasonal spirit will guide you. Then ask for a ritual that will deepen your experience with the season.

I highly suggest you seek out all four seasons at the appropriate times and, through a relationship with them, learn the mysteries of the changing year.

Living Rituals of Native People

As modern practitioners of the craft, we know that the Wheel of the Year is an amalgam of many different cultures, beliefs, and traditions. Though mostly based on the Celtic, Teutonic, and Greek tales, other bits of myth and folklore are blended together in our wisdom. So much of this information survived because the holidays were incorporated into the traditions of the Christian church. We can see the echoes of our holidays in their celebrations. As people initially blended paganism and Christianity, particularly in the Celtic Christian church, we could see the similarities but also understand the differences. Soon the Christian tones subsumed the pagan elements. Until undertaking a study of modern paganism, I was not aware of the true pagan roots of the holidays.

Although much of this knowledge was preserved, I wonder how much was lost. How many rituals and rites were there originally in the various European shamanic and witchcraft traditions? Those that did survive into record were corrupted into tales of demons and devils. Many witches claim to have surviving family traditions, but few share them with the public. Scholars debate the veracity of these traditions and their lore. I wonder if we can ever regain what we lost.

As we look to the surviving shamanic traditions, which are fairly unbroken compared to those of Wicca, we see a range of rituals beyond the seasonal celebrations. If modern witches look to the core shamanic techniques and the healing traditions of tribal people to further their own practice, understanding the rituals of other cultures is an important aspect of forging our new traditions. It must be understood that there are great cultural differences between the shamanic traditions of the Americas, Siberia, Asia, Africa, and Australia and the witchcraft traditions of Europe. But there are also similarities between

them, through the core shamanic techniques. If there are some similarities, then by looking at these living traditions, we can speculate on how European shamanic traditions would have developed if they had been unhindered by persecution. We can use this information to help our modern traditions adapt and grow.

Here are some important rituals and key concepts borrowed from a wide range of Native peoples who are still in touch with their shamanic heritage. Perhaps they had an equivalent practice in the lands of Europe, and we've simply lost them. Perhaps they were once part of the role of the witch. Many have been adopted into the lore of the modern witch and shaman. Think about how these concepts fit into your life and your own magickal practice. You don't have to adopt them all, but think about their purpose and whether they serve a purpose in your life.

All My Relations

I first heard the phrase "all my relations" in reference to a stone, and I didn't understand it. This woman I met was talking about how she was related to the stone people. All I saw was a rock. I didn't get it. To the spiritually aware, all things are alive. Native people look to nonhuman beings as extended family. They refer to humans as two-legged people and many animals as four-legged people. Vegetation is referred to as tree people and plant people. Stones are stone people. Each has a spirit. Each has a consciousness. Even when that consciousness is different from our own, these beings are still our extended family. By using such language, we remember that nothing is just an object. Everything is alive, and we must give respect and thanks for our partnership with it.

Indian Giving

The phrase Indian giver was meant as a derogatory term for someone who gives a gift and then takes it back. As explained to me, such stories truly came about when Native people gave gifts to the first European settlers. They knew each object was alive and had its own journey. We are the keepers and guardians of power objects, and must know when it is time to pass them on in their journey. The Native people tried to explain to the Europeans how to pass on gifts, but the Europeans didn't understand the spiritual nature of the situation and felt that the Natives were taking freely given gifts back, in essence

cheating or stealing from them.

When you hold a sacred tool, remember that you do not own it. You are its partner, and must be ready to let go when your time together is done. When I first met my honored teacher and friend Wendy Fogg, while teaching a crystal class at her center, my beautiful, large, and expensive selenite crystal "asked" me to go to her, because they had work to do together. I was not using the crystal much, and it wanted to be used in healing sessions and felt drawn to her. I heard its request in my mind, during the workshop. She was drawn to it as well. At the end of the class, I offered it to her. From a material point of view, it was hard for me, but spiritually it was my only option to truly honor my stone spirit ally.

Making Relatives

Tribal people believe that family is beyond simple blood connections and genetics. There are many rituals and ways to "adopt" someone into your family. This is a serious undertaking. Such bonds are spiritual and must be honored and respected. I have several people whom I consider spiritual family, my witch sisters and brothers, but have not yet formed this bond of family with any of them through formal ritual and agreement. Making relatives is an important, powerful, loving, and very rewarding process when done right, and for the right reasons.

Moon Time

Moon time refers to a woman's time of menstruation, recognized the world over as a time of power. Many traditions sequester menstruating women from other members and rituals. Some people erroneously believe that such traditions look at menstruation as shameful or dirty, but most feel that it is simply a very powerful time and such powerful energies can disrupt other energies. Women in their Moon time have their own rituals and sacred duties. It's only in cultures where the feminine is not honored that there is a stigma attached to menstruation. In many ways, the rituals sequestering menstruating women are a way to honor just how inherently powerful women are.

Most witch priestesses I know, however, do not sequester themselves when menstruating and do magick during their personal Moon time, feeling they are at their most powerful and in tune with the Goddess. Certain traditions of Wicca believe a menstruating woman should not be in a circle or do magick,

but most feel it is a personal choice. Other traditions have prohibitions against pregnant women being in the circle. Priestesses in my circles have had no problem menstruating or being pregnant in circle. Some witches use menstrual blood to anoint candles and ritual tools. Such fluids are sacred in many forms of sex magick. Others feel the energy is too erratic or unfocused, and not useful for true magick. Each time is unique, so many priestesses wait for the moment of menstruation to see if any magick or ritual is needed in their life at that time. Traditionally the most powerful time for manifestation magick is right before menstruation, like working with the full moon. Magick done for banishing and removing things from your life can be done during menstruation or just afterward, like the magick done on the waning moon. For more information on moon cycles, see chapter 12 of *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft.* Not being a woman myself, I don't presume to inform women about these mysteries. Speak with experienced priestesses. Learn your own bodies and cycles, and find what is true for you.

Rites of Passage

Most tribes hold rites of passage and initiations to mark major life changes. The practices of New World cultures coincide with the rites of Europe, Africa, and the East. Ceremonies marking the rites of passage, including birth, child blessings, coming into adulthood, marriage, initiation, recognizing elderhood, crossing over, and funeral rites, are often conducted by the shaman. In this role, the shaman is acting as minister to the tribe. The ideas are incorporated into modern traditions of paganism. More on conducting rites of passage as a community minister will be covered in the fifth volume of this Temple of Witchcraft series.

Seven Generations

Seven Generations is now the name of an environmentally friendly line of cleaning products, but the idea behind it is far older. Before you do something, reflect on how your actions will affect not only you, but also your children—and your grandchildren and great grandchildren. How will your actions affect the next seven generations? Is it something you would want to happen to you and your family, your tribe? Act accordingly, based on this viewpoint. Tribal people look to see what is for the good of the whole, the good of the tribe. The future generations are the ancestors reborn. As we honor those on the other side, we

must make sure there is a place for them to return to, and keep it in a healthy, sustainable condition. This philosophy takes the Wiccan Rede to a new level, by thinking about what will return not only to you, but to your future kin.

Some in the Native cultures would look at this section as pirating their culture, just as many object to the use of the word shaman to describe European practices. I've been lucky enough to encounter Native teachers who feel this information is meant to be shared with the world. As we enter a global civilization, we are all children of the world, with access to the history and myths of many people. Many hold the purpose of keeping the traditions separate and pure. That is needed. Others are called to blend and merge. They are needed as well. The two can coexist, and wise practitioners of each way will know this. As we journey into the next age, we must have our spiritual practices to sustain us in these turbulent times. Together we are all forging a new world identity, and with a multicultural view, we can draw upon the wisdom of many traditions to aid this transition. I consider myself a shamanic witch of the world, and not of any specific culture.

Witches and Native Traditions

While studying traditional shamanism, I discovered that many in the Native American traditions get quite upset when they find out that you are a witch. I was so shocked when I first experienced this. I feel that our traditions have so much in common, and up until that point I had been welcomed. Everything was fine until I used the word witch. Then people got very upset. I felt like I was being judged, like I had done something wrong. I've heard the same story from many other witches.

The misunderstanding occurred when European settlers first came to the Americas. In the variety of Native languages, the word for "evil practitioner" or "harmful practitioner" was always translated to the word "witch" by missionaries and anthropologists. One who uses the gifts of spirit to harm others for their own gain is the definition of an evil practitioner. Some tribal people believe these evil witches live in secret, not revealing themselves for fear of reprisal. And perhaps there are some. There are helpful and harmful people in all cultures and traditions. Many Native people believe such practitioners of evil magick cannot shapeshift, heal, or work with spirit helpers.

They can only make charms and cast curses, evoke evil spirits, or bind other spirits to do their will.

To many Native people, the word witch is charged with this traditional meaning. Most cannot understand why people would call themselves witches unless they meant they were evil practitioners of the spirit arts. Even when a modern witch tries to explain why the translations occurred, and how they are trying to fix it by reclaiming the word, we are met with strange looks. I've even met with resistance from white people who didn't grow up in a Native culture but later adopted their belief system. Even those practitioners who acknowledge the cultural and historic context of the word witch prefer that we use the word Wicca or Wiccan when describing our practice and ourselves. So in those cases, I do. Another time I met a Native medicine man who told me that, to him, witch was just a word. He didn't like the word, but it was my choice, and he would judge me by my actions, not my words. I think that's the fairest outlook of all. That's how I judge everybody—witch, shaman, or otherwise.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 23–24 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.
- Use shamanic techniques in your exploration of the Wheel of the Year and the seasons.
- Think about aspects of tribal wisdom, and incorporate them into your life.

Continuing Assignments

- Continue with your dream work and traditional journaling.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Be mindful of the energies and allies in your life. Continue to develop your spirit-ally relationships.

[contents]

12

Lesson Eight
Animal Spirit Medicine

Medicine is power, and power is medicine. Medicine is the power to create change, to transform what is into what will be. The spirit worlds are brimming with medicine to be used in the Middle World. Shamanic witches focus their power, the heart of their magick, into healing and harmony. Medicine is magick used in service for the greater good, to bring balance between the worlds. This is true medicine, and is the mark of a shaman.

Each of our shamanic spirit allies holds a particular power, its own medicine. Each spirit has an ability to bring balance to the worlds. Each spirit is a guardian of a particular vibration, a particular power. Animal spirits have their own medicine. Plant spirits each have their own medicine power. Trees, stones, stars—all allies hold their own song, their own dance, their own healing power.

When you partner with a spirit ally, you become a partner in guardianship of the medicine. You become a gateway to bring that medicine into the Middle World for your people. Your shamanic power is quantified by the medicine of your allies. Those who carry Crow medicine heal somewhat differently than those who hold Badger medicine. The stronger and more balanced your spirit partnerships, the better you will be able to administer this otherworldly medicine.

Animal Medicine

Animals are the keepers of divine wisdom. Living in greater harmony with the world around us all, they have many lessons and blessings for us. By following their basic animal instincts, their inherent nature, all is provided for them. They move in harmony with the cycles of life and death. Having no ego, at least not in the human sense, they rely less on the middle self. By following the animal instincts of the lower self, they are in touch with their own higher divine

essence through this instinctual wisdom in a way that most humans can only dream of.

Some modern mystics believe human beings as a race learned animal wisdom through our process of evolution. As we rose from the same great central root of life that spawned a multitude of creatures, we gained the inherent wisdom of our living family. Their lessons are a part of the energetic fields of consciousness that connect us all (See *ITOW,* chapter 7). As we developed a strong sense of middle-self individuality and identified solely with it, we fell out of touch with the natural, intuitive wisdom. We fell out of balance with nature. We forgot the language and wisdom of the animals. Modern shamanic practitioners consider this the true meaning of the Biblical fall. To restore our balance, tribal healers look to the lessons of our animal kin.

On one level, animal medicine is an intuitive system used in tribal herbalism to classify healing plants. Animals are often intuitively drawn to the herbs that will cure their illnesses and restore their vitality. Some animals are prone to certain conditions, and are therefore associated with certain types of herbs. These herbs aid in aligning those animal temperaments with health and vitality. Humans who have a similar temperament to that animal can also benefit from the herbs associated with that animal. Many people have a bearlike temperament and constitution, for example. Roots consumed by bears after hibernation are useful to clear congestion in the lungs and bring brighter awareness back to the physical world after a long winter. Other plants have parts that resemble a certain animal, and that correspondence indicates that, medically or spiritually, the plant is linked to that animal's wisdom. This is a tribal form of both the Principle of Correspondence and what was known in Europe as the alchemical Doctrine of Signatures, used in both magick and medicine. The doctrine states that plants that look like a part of the body are used to heal that part of the body.

Animal *spirit* medicine, however, doesn't refer to plant medicine at all. Animal spirit medicine is wisdom embodied by the animal itself, as each animal has an area of expertise in reminding humans to live in balance with nature. The animal, through its life patterns and mythology, has something to teach us. That change in consciousness when we embody its lessons is its medicine. Animal medicine can come to us through normal channels of communication. By

seeing an animal and being reminded of its lessons, we take in its medicine. More ritualistic forms of healing require a shamanic practitioner to journey to the other worlds and retrieve the animal's medicine for you, and energetically transfer it into your body and consciousness.

Working with Animal Medicine

If each animal embodies a specific type of wisdom, it is important to understand the message of its medicine. In chapter 7, you have already sought out your primary power animal. As you continue to journey, you will find more animal allies. Each one will give you clues to the issues you are facing, both lifelong lessons with your primary ally and short-term situations in a specific journey.

Decoding an animal's medicine seems like an impossible mystery at first, but like many things in the craft, there is an art and science behind it. By looking at each animal's shape, form, color, habitat, and natural tendencies, you can intuit its medicine. An animal's lesson is encoded in tribal stories and traditional mythology. These sources are a great asset to the shamanic witch, but your own study, observation, and thought might give personal insights that no book could ever provide. I suggest starting with a traditional encyclopedia entry of the animal detailing its natural tendencies. As you read, think about their symbolic meanings in your life. Then look for the myths and stories of the animal. Let your creative imagination digest the knowledge, and see what message it holds for you. One meaning will resonate stronger than another for you. Because we are children of the information age, with access to many different stories and cultures, we may find that these sources of wisdom conflict at times. Different cultures look at the same animal and ascribe different meanings to it. You must discern which meaning is for you.

The following are a variety of animals and their potential medicine. Use this information to inspire your own search into their meanings.

Ant

The lessons of Ant involve group consciousness and community living. When you look at what a community of ants can accomplish together, in harmony, it's quite amazing. They embody the principles of organization, patience, determination, and teamwork. Ants are creatures of the Underworld, sacred to

the dark goddesses. The goddess Ceres, mother of Proserpina, queen of the Underworld, is associated with ants.

Badger

A great totem for all healers, Badger grants you the tenacity to get to the root of the problem, digging past distractions to heal completely. It teaches persistence and self-reliance. Badger is sacred to the Underworld realm, freely exploring its mysteries.

Bat

Bats are the totems to the dark Underworld goddesses, and are particularly special to Hecate, the Greek triune goddess of witches and the Underworld. Their medicine is the ability to navigate in times of darkness and be comfortable in the dark. Even in the Underworld, this totem grants the ability to soar and rise above the dark. Bat teaches us the lessons of change, transition, and initiation, also linked to the power of Dragon.

Bear

Bear medicine is powerful for any shaman. In some tribal communities, tracking, hunting, and killing a bear was the shaman's final initiation. Bear is power and strength. The bear's physical body is large, strong, and dangerous, though unless provoked or hunting, bears lead rather quiet lives. A great portion of the year is spent in hibernation, a time of rest, regeneration, and solitude. In humans, Bear medicine manifests as a time of introspection, balance, and meditation. Bear has strong associations with the Goddess, in particular Artemis, the Greek huntress goddess and patron of women, children, and witches. She is linked to the crescent moon and the constellation Ursa Major.

Beetle

The beetle is the Egyptian animal of death and resurrection. The dung beetle, rolling its ball of dung through the desert sands, is symbolic of the gods rising from the darkest depths and rolling the sun across the desert sky. Khepera is the Egyptian beetle god, sometimes credited with creating the universe. Beetles are the medicine of regeneration. Beetle is associated with the alchemical process of putrefaction, when things turn black, decomposing before being reborn.

Blue Jay

The message of Blue Jay is to be assertive, to speak your mind and heart to those around you. Blue Jay teaches you not to fear the reactions of others, but simply to do what you need to do for your own sake. The color blue, like the throat chakra, is indicative of communication on all levels, in both the inner and outer worlds.

Buffalo

Buffalo medicine is a sacred teacher, teaching us about the abundance and prosperity of nature, if we maintain balance and value all things. Tribes who lived off buffalo honored the animal greatly, using every portion of the animal in their lives, not just the meat. Buffalo, like the Bull, is strong earthy wisdom, and teaches us how to be spiritual beings in the physical world. The divine Native American figure of the White Buffalo Woman plays a prominent role in past myths as well as Native prophecies of the future.

Bull

In ancient cultures, particularly in the Mediterranean, the bull was held sacred to the Goddess and the moon, and seen as a manifestation of the Horned God. The bull is a symbol of manhood and virility, yet is also soft and sensual, and the horns are like the crescents of the moon. The later myths of the fierce Minotaur are the remnants of this spiritual knowledge. Bull medicine lends power and endurance, while retaining awareness of earthly pleasures and responsibilities.

Butterfly

Butterfly is one of many totems that embody transformation and change. The caterpillar must go through a period of rest, retreating into the cocoon to transform into the butterfly, an insect that can ascend and fly over the caterpillar's earthbound world. Butterfly, with its colorful patterns, teaches us how to rise above in our transformation, to see inner beauty and honor our creativity.

Cat

The archetypal witch's familiar, Cat is the power of magick, the moon, and the night. Cat is the medicine of following your instincts and intuition as well as following your bliss and taking time to relax. Cat is not about doing, but about

simply being. The Egyptian goddess Bast, depicted with a cat's head, holds Cat sacred, as did much of Egyptian culture. Cats are the steeds of the Norse goddess Freya, pulling her sky chariot.

Cow

The energy of the divine mother comes through the medicine of Cow, honored in India and ancient Egypt. Cow continually gives nourishing milk, unconditionally. Cow medicine represents the unconditional love of the mother, and is linked to the moon and emotional realm due to its crescent horns. Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of love and nourishment, is the keeper of Cow medicine. Like many Egyptian figures who are depicted with animal heads, she sometimes is viewed as a woman with a cow's head. Isis, whose crown also has cow horns, is associated with both Cow and Hathor.

Coyote

Coyote is the power of the trickster, the mercurial figure of magick, illusions, and change found in many pantheons. Though trickster figures are viewed by some as evil and liars, they are usually tricking us out of seeing things in a fixed way, and into new possibilities. Tricksters have a great sense of humor, though we don't appreciate their jokes until the situation is over.

Crab

The hard shell of the crab represents the power of protection, protecting what is soft, tender, and vulnerable. Crab, and its associated zodiac sign, Cancer, are linked with ocean mother goddesses, as well as the family unit and the nurturing of children. Crab medicine is not linear, direct, or confrontational; it moves side to side, like a walking crab when it takes action.

Crow

Crow is another medicine associated with the Goddess, in particular the Celtic war goddesses. The yoga position named for this bird also has goddess associations with it. Sacred to the Morrigan in her many aspects, the crow embodies magick, protection, shapeshifting, and sacred law. Crow medicine dictates what is divinely right, not what is right according to humanity's laws or what is popular. Crows are used in divination systems, as the number of crows viewed portends the future.

Deer

Compassion is the medicine of Deer. With this totem, we learn to take things gently and softly, finding both love for ourselves and love for others. We walk softly, with an awareness of all things. Deer grants the gifts of grace, beauty, and agility.

Dog

Dog represents the power of loyalty, companionship, and unconditional love. Think of the power of pet dogs in everyday life. Their company has the power to calm, heal, and rejuvenate the spirit. Though some traditions insist that domesticated animals cannot be your totem or healer, I've known many people who were never told that "rule" and found Dog in the otherworld. Dog is closely associated with the goddesses of witchcraft. Mythic dogs guard the entrance and exit of the Underworld. They appear on the Stone Age petroglyphs with images of the Tree of Life, and are an appropriate totem for shamanic witches (Figure 31). Dog is sacred to the goddess Artemis/ Diana, who leads her hounds on the hunt.

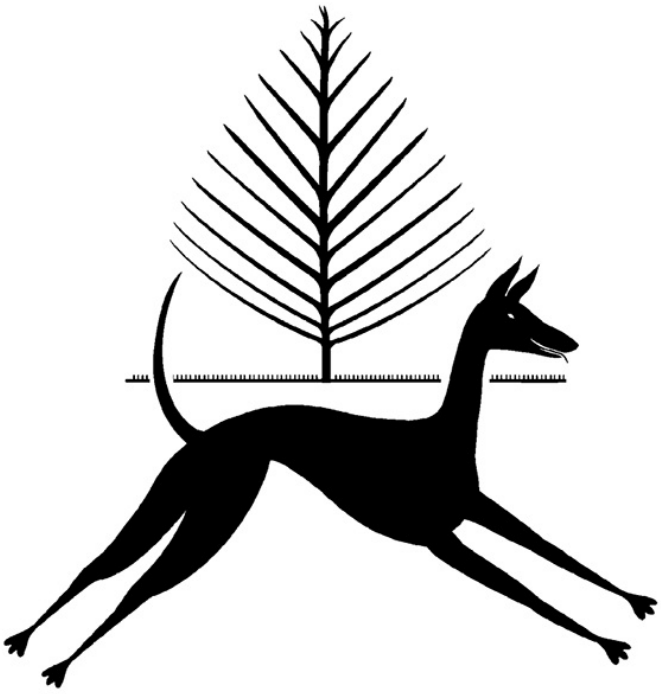


Figure 31: *Stone Age Dog Image*

Dolphin

A popular totem in the new age is Dolphin, though we also find associations in ancient myth. Dylan, the Welsh water god and son of Arianrhod, is associated

with Dolphin. The spirit power of Dolphin revolves around breath and rhythm. It reminds us to breathe consciously and aids in meditation and stress relief. Dolphin holds the mysteries of the water and therefore love, being an animal that breathes air, yet descends beneath the waves.

Dragonfly

Dragonfly keeps the mysteries of illusion, and is called upon to break our illusions and delusions. When we get too romantic, seeing what we want to see rather than what is, or when we see the worst, our fears and nightmares, and forget the blessings, the iridescent wings of Dragonfly help us know the truth.

Eagle

Eagle is one of the most sacred shamanic birds in all the tribes and cultures that know it. Most myths have this majestic bird perched in the upper branches of the World Tree as an intermediary between the highest realms and humanity. Eagle signals powerful messages of spirit. Flight, eyesight, and hunting are keys to understanding this animal, who is sacred to the god Zeus/Jupiter.

Falcon

Falcon is the bird of the Norse goddess Freya, who wears a falcon cloak, allowing the wearer to shapeshift into a falcon. Falcon is the power of the messenger, bringing the highest ideals and thoughts to the Middle World. Falcon is associated with the Egyptian god Ra and his descendent Horus, both of whom are often depicted with a falcon or hawk head on a man's body.

Ferret

The medicine of Ferret is secrecy, stealth, and solitary practice. A traditional familiar of the old hedge witch, the archetypal solitary practitioner, Ferret teaches self-reliance and finding what you need.

Fox

Fox medicine is the power of invisibility. Foxes have the ability to blend into their surroundings, changing their coat with the seasons. Their camouflage ability gives us the ability to be cunning, to remain unseen when we want to move unnoticed and unhindered by others. In some Celtic traditions, the red fox

is the bearer of the fire elemental energy.

Frog

Another archetypal witch familiar associated with other worlds and witchy brews, the spirit medicine of Frog relates to the element of water and thus the realm of emotions and psychic ability. Those who carry Frog medicine are sensitive to their environment. Frog also teaches the lesson of finding your voice, no matter what others might think of you.

Goat

The power of Goat is the determination to climb, to improve and go beyond your limits. Those with Goat medicine take on responsibility and are challenged to use it for the highest good. Goat brings the blessing, and the lesson, of single-mindedness. In that aspect, goats are about both pleasure and fear. Pan is known as the Greek goat-footed, horned god of virility, music, and dance, but his name is also the root of our word “panic,” which he often caused. Goats are also sacred to the Norse thunder god and warrior Thor, as his chariot is pulled by two goats. These goats were magick, and could be eaten, but they would never die. The goats would be automatically resurrected and regenerated from the bones left from the meal.

Goose

Goose appears when there is a warning to be given to sit up and take notice of your path. Goose is the medicine of change and travel, and following your instincts, which will lead you on the journey you need to travel. Goose will take you where you need to go, which may not necessarily be where you want to go. Like Frog, Goose is also about finding your voice and being heard, particularly if you have a warning to give and no one is heeding you. The challenge of Goose is to know when the warning is for you and when it is for others.

Hawk

Like Eagle and Falcon, Hawk is a messenger from the upper realm to the world of mortals. Like the other birds of prey, keen eyesight is part of its signature. The medicine of Red-Tailed Hawk has the additional power of bringing divine spiritual energy down to the root chakra, to help us spiritualize the energy of this chakra, particularly when working with sexual energy.

Horse

Horse is the medicine of power, of fire and energy. We still measure mechanical power through the term “horsepower.” Horse is the power of swiftness as well as the ability to journey shamanically and the ability to take long, physical journeys in our waking life. The shamanic steed of the drumbeat is envisioned as a horse. Horses are sacred to the Celtic goddesses, including Epona, Rhiannon, and Macha. Poseidon/ Neptune, lord of the oceans, holds horses sacred.

Lion

Lion embodies the qualities of leadership and royalty, and also the responsibility that goes along with them. Lions are known mythically for their courage, but also for their pride. Lion is the medicine of learning appropriate and inappropriate expressions of pride. Lions embody the passion and vitality of fire. Sekhmet, the Egyptian goddess who is associated with both Hathor and Bast, is the lion-headed destroyer. She embodies the power of the destroying desert sun.

Lizard

Literal and symbolic regeneration is the province of the lizard, as some re-grow tails as needed. Lizard waits for its prey in a dreamlike state, so Lizard teaches patience and how to move between two worlds, the physical and the dreamland. Lizards have associations with male genitalia, virility, and the Greek god Apollo.

Mosquito

Mosquito is the medicine of learning how to deal with annoyance and fear. It is a great teacher of meditation, because during meditation we experience stinging distractions like the bite of a mosquito.

Moth

Moth medicine is much like that of Butterfly, but while the butterfly is a creature of daylight, the moth is of the night. Moth gives us the power to see in the dark, such as the darkness of depression or shadow work. It helps guide us to the light that takes us out of the darkness. Just as a moth is attracted to light but often gets burned in the flames, it warns us not to get too obsessed with the light of spirituality and magick, forsaking all other things and getting

“burned” by intense spiritual powers before we are ready for them.

Mountain Lion

Fearless and standing its ground, Mountain Lion’s medicine stakes its claim and sets its territory. Those who receive it learn how to defend their ground and stand fearless in their truth.

Mouse

Scrutiny is the key word for Mouse medicine. Though its vision is poor, the mouse navigates through its whiskers, using its sensitivity to scrutinize what is the right path and what is dangerous. Mouse medicine helps us deal with fear and feelings of powerlessness.

Otter

Otter medicine is another animal spirit associated with motherhood, family, and children. The strong feminine energy is flavored by a sense of fun and play with children. Otter teaches us how to share and play well with others.

Owl

Owl is the power of wisdom, sacred to the goddess of wisdom, Athena. Owl is another witch familiar, and is associated with magick, divination, astral travel, and true sight. Some owl myths are less than happy, including the Welsh story of Blodeuwedd the flower maiden who betrayed her husband, Lugh. In such cases, Owl brings the message of deception. In some American myths, Owl medicine teaches us to hide our power, or at least not flaunt it because it is dangerous to do so.

Panther

The spirit of Panther is the spirit of grace, swiftness, and beauty. The black panther has Underworld associations with it due to its color, like the flip side of the golden-lion archetype.

Pig

Pig is the medicine of abundance and taking care of your body’s needs. Celtic myths record stories of otherworldly pigs that are immortal. Like the goats of Thor, they can be eaten, but never die. They are magickally resurrected from their bones by the next morning, ready to be eaten again. Pig medicine also teaches us about greed and selfishness, not seeing other people’s needs and

not sharing what we have.

Porcupine

Porcupine is the medicine of protection and defense. Through its sharp quills, it is protected from outside harm. Most predators know to keep away from the dangerous porcupine, for their own sake. Porcupine can teach us when we are being too “prickly” toward others and may have our defenses up too high.

Rabbit

The power of Rabbit medicine is very energetic, and has a dual nature. One aspect is about fertility, in terms of both children and inner fertility and creativity. The other aspect is about fear, dealing with fear or knowing when it is the right time to run away from danger.

Ram

Ram energy is the archetype of the leader. Rams must charge ahead fearlessly into the unknown. Ram’s medicine teaches courage and bravery, but those who carry Ram medicine must also learn when it is not the time to be headstrong.

Raven

The dark feathers of the raven hold the mystery of magick and the Underworld. The dark is like the void of creation and destruction. Ravens feed on carrion. Those with this medicine learn to be comfortable in the dark and with the dead. Raven is a shamanic bird, traveling between the worlds. Sacred to the Celtic Bran and many aspects of the war goddess the Morrigan, two ravens were the familiars of Odin. Named Hugin and Mugin, or Thought and Memory, Odin would send them out into the nine worlds to see and know all, reporting back to him.

Rooster

Rooster is the totem of virility and male power. Roosters represent the power of protection, and guardianship of the sacred feminine power. Those with Rooster medicine make us aware, crying out both in celebration and in warning. The gift of Rooster is vigilance.

Salmon

Although all fish have special medicine, Salmon is renowned in Celtic lore as

the fish of wisdom, feeding on the sacred hazel nuts. Salmon is the totem of inspiration and memory. Salmon who swim upstream, returning to their spawning ground, teach us to remember and respect our homeland and to give to the next generation.

Scorpion

Scorpion is the totem of transformation, psychic ability, and secrets. The poison of the scorpion is its medicine, for poison can be lethal and, in certain doses as found in homeopathy, curative. The power of Scorpion medicine can also be destructive or healing. Scorpions are sacred to the Greek Furies, as they carry flails made of scorpions. The Furies are the three Underworld spirits of vengeance who punish criminals and evildoers, particularly those who have killed family members.

Sea Horse

Sea Horse medicine teaches fidelity in relationship. Since sea horses switch gender roles, with the male giving birth, their medicine gives us the ability to see our partner's role and empathize with it.

Snake

Snake is the archetype of transformation, shedding its skin and revealing new growth. Snake is strongly associated with both the God, as a symbol of virility, and of the Goddess, crawling on its belly so close to the Earth Mother. Gaia held pythons sacred when honored in her temple in Delphi before Apollo's worshippers took it over, slaying it as the "snake of winter." Snake is sacred to Persephone, the Underworld queen. Snake represents the power of change and adaptation, incorporating wisdom into your new form.

Spider

Spider medicine holds the keys to creative expression and communication, particularly writing, since the first letters were said to be woven in a spider's web. This creature is sacred to weavers, particularly the Spider Grandmother, Athena, Ariadne, and Arachne. You can see spider-weaver images in the triple fates of many cultures. Spider teaches patience and solitude, waiting silently in the center of the web for its prey, carefully watching where it moves so as not to become trapped in its own web. When we experience the arachnid response, the fear of something alien, Spider teaches us to get over our fears.

Squirrel

Squirrels prepare for the winter by gathering nuts. Squirrel medicine prepares us for the future by teaching us to gather resources. This energy helps us save, gather, and store for a future date. In Norse mythology, the World Tree is home to the squirrel Ratatosk, who runs up and down the tree carrying messages, fulfilling the function of a Mercury archetype.

Swan

Swan is an otherworldly animal. Our myth of the ugly duckling turning into the beautiful swan demonstrates that Swan medicine is about inner beauty, teaching coordination, grace, and balance. With those aspects in place, outer beauty can manifest.

Turtle

The hard shell of Turtle is a medicine of protection. In Native American myths, the North American continent is called Turtle Island. The land is on the back of the cosmic turtle, traveling through the cosmic waters. Turtle is low to the ground, granting gifts of grounding, centering, and the mysteries of the earth goddess. Turtles are the medicine of long life and the great wisdom that comes from living a long life. Turtle teaches us patience and how to enjoy taking our time.

Vulture

Vulture is a bird related to the Underworld, being a scavenger of the dead. Vulture medicine gives the powers of the Underworld—regeneration, transformation, and passage to the ancestors. Vulture helps us understand our own mortality and the cycle of life and death in our own sustenance.

Whale

The song of the whale is the keeper of history and records. Song is the key to Whale medicine, and those with this animal learn to sing their song and tell their tales. Whales live in a tight community, teaching us the value of community and togetherness.

Wolf

Wolf is the totem of protection. Wolves are clannish, living in a pack and taking care of the pack, so their medicine is about protecting the family and clan. Wolf

hair is used in a witch's protection spells and potions. Wolf is the totem of those who are teachers, sharing their knowledge with the pack.

Wren

Wren teaches us the gifts of resourcefulness. The wren is associated with the story of the naming of Lleu. His entire story is one of resourcefulness and boldness, as both Lleu and Gwydion had to find ways around his mother's curses, which prevented him from receiving a name, weapons, or a bride. Lleu's mother was the only one who could name him, and she refused, so they tricked her into giving him a name. Wrens themselves are resourceful and bold birds, despite their small size.

Sometimes an animal's message is obvious and straightforward. Other times it requires reflection. As you work with animal spirits, you might find yourself restricted to animals that pertain to a specific location or culture. If you live in North America, you might only work with spirits from that land. If you work only in the Greek tradition, then animals associated only with Greek myth appear to you. If you work with the Celts, then only those of Europe appear. Other shamanic witches work with animals from all over the world, and look to the myths of many different cultures. Many animals, although unique and individual, have overlapping correspondences, creating "equivalents" in different lands. The function that Eagle serves in one tradition is filled by Condor in another. Many witches work with the mythic animals, such as the unicorn, dragon, and griffon, which exist only in the other worlds and have no physical counterparts in the material world. As an eclectic witch, I have animal allies from all over the globe. In the spirit world, we are not restricted by geography.

Although animals visit us in journeys, they also get our attention through physical sightings. If an animal makes its presence known to you, especially if it crosses your path, the animal spirit could be making you aware of its medicine. Such encounters act as signals. The more frequent or intense an encounter, the more likely it is a message that must be heeded.

Encounters may not be direct, particularly if the animal is spiritually appropriate for you, but not in your physical location. If you live in the Midwest, you will most likely not encounter Whale medicine directly, but if you encounter a lot of information on whales, or people talk to you about whales, then perhaps Whale is contacting you. I look for the synchronicity of three. If I

encounter an animal in some form three times, I know there is something there for me. Even if the message is not specifically concerning animals, I still follow a pattern of three. If I hear about a particular book, person, stone, or place three times in a short period of time, I pay attention and seek out the message.

Once you determine that a message is being given, look to see the animal's medicine and message. Make a fetish of that animal, and carry it with you to remind you of its power. Keep the medicine in mind as you face life's situations. Sometimes conscious knowledge is enough to remedy the situation. Other times it requires direct spirit contact through a journey, or even facilitation from another practitioner for spirit medicine retrieval.

Healing with Animal Medicine

Although animals can communicate to us through physical sightings and synchronicity, shamanic witches can experience their power directly through a journey. As you have already journeyed with your animal guide in lesson 3, you can continue to develop a relationship with your animal guide. Ask it to teach you its medicine by taking you on more journeys and helping you shapeshift or merge with it. By seeing the world from your totem animal's point of view, you integrate its medicine into your consciousness. Though these experiences are powerful, the deepest form of animal-medicine healing is through retrieval.

Animal medicine retrieval is the energetic infusion of a power animal's spiritual essence into the recipient, to restore balance. The medicine is a form of energy, much like the energy of sending light for healing (*ITOW*, chapter 15). In this case, the energy is fused with the animal's specific lessons. They become a part of the recipient.

Shamans usually perform a retrieval for another, though self-retrievals are possible. Traditionally the shamanic practitioner journeys to the other world for the client, finding the appropriate healing totem that matches the client's need. The animal's medicine will resonate with the client's particular issues. The journeyer makes an agreement with the animal spirit to perform the healing and return to the Middle World with the animal's healing energy. Ritualistically the energy is then infused from the shaman to the client. If the client accepts this healing energy on all levels, this animal medicine can bring a shift in

consciousness, granting new insights and facilitating healing. Sometimes the change occurs spontaneously, though the shaman can plant the seeds by discussing the power of the animal, and its lessons, with the client. From this change in consciousness, dramatic spiritual, psychological, and physical healing can occur. The animal spirit could even become a short-term or long-term totem ally for the client.

Animal medicine retrieval is performed when one is out of balance with the natural world. This healing brings insight to the issues at hand, and gives both energetic solutions and real-world philosophies to integrate for a permanent solution. By keeping the animal's behavior in mind, it gives you a real-world model on which to base some of your thinking and behavior. If you need to speak up, and you retrieve Blue Jay medicine, think about Blue Jay and, in some symbolic way, mimic it when you need to speak up. Retrievals occur when there is physical illness, misfortune, confusion, or a wide range of emotional, mental, or spiritual problems. If the shaman suspects the client has lost their primary animal totem, a retrieval is needed. Animal medicine retrievals are the first foundational step to bolster the client when preparing for deeper soul healings.

Lost Power Animals

As each of us has a guiding animal spirit, charged to protect us and keep us on the path during our dreams and spiritual journeys, the guide is also there in the waking world, protecting us and keeping us on our life's path. Shamans of various traditions believe that if you dishonor your totem animal, or simply neglect it, the animal spirit could leave you. This vacuum of guardianship leaves you open to physical and spiritual ailments. Those who are plagued by illness, accidents, nightmares, and misfortune are said to be those who have lost their power animal. They have no spirit guarding them from the spirits of sickness and bad luck. They have no one intuitively guiding them on the right path of life.

To heal this situation, a shamanic practitioner enters the spirit worlds on behalf of the client, and seeks out the lost totem. The practitioner learns why the totem left and how to restore the relationship, convincing it to go back to the client and make a fresh start. The shaman then teaches the client how to honor the totem to maintain the link. If the original totem refuses to return, the

shaman must seek out another totem animal, and convince it to partner with the ailing client. A successful retrieval of an animal totem makes a dramatic difference in your consciousness and can literally change a situation in your life overnight.

In our modern culture, how many of us have honored our totem animals? Is this disastrous fate awaiting us all? I don't think so. Many of us are already honoring our spirit animals without realizing it. Many people who are seemingly nonmagickal have an affinity for a particular animal. They may have photos, statues, or t-shirts of the animal, or obsessively learn about it. I had a student who was into sharks. He knew all about sharks, and over time had a shark key chain, poster, statue, screen saver, and even a shark-related e-mail address. Before studying with me, he had no involvement in shamanism or witchcraft, but he wasn't surprised to find Shark as his totem. He had been intuitively honoring it in his own way, and the shark spirit recognized that.

I think most animal spirits are "chomping at the bit" to work with us, and understand that in our society we have not been taught to acknowledge and honor them. Though loss of a primary power animal does happen, in my experience it happens less frequently than I would expect considering how few people in our modern culture know about, and honor, their totem animal. I did nothing to honor my spirit animals before I began my study of shamanism, but they were still waiting for me on my first journeys.

Animal spirit medicine can benefit everybody, even those connected to a strong primary totem. Sometimes another animal's medicine is needed to help in a current situation. It doesn't mean that your primary animal has left you, or didn't do a good job. Sometimes we need specialists. Shamanic witches work with many totems, in both the short and long term. Each of the nine places on your medicine wheel mandala can have a different long-term animal ally, teaching you the lessons of each direction (figure 4).

Exercise 25

Animal Spirit Medicine Retrieval Journey

You can effectively journey for animal spirit medicine for yourself. As with any other journey, you prepare yourself as usual, but the intention is to find an animal medicine to heal your particular issues. If you don't have a clear sense

of what your healing issues are at this time, hold the intention for the "animal medicine that is correct and good at this time." Create your sacred space, and begin your journey music.

At the start of your journey, connect with a guide or totem that is appropriate and trustworthy, usually your primary power animal that you discovered in chapter 7. Relate your healing intention to your guide, and follow your guide to one of the three worlds to find a new medicinal ally. When you find the ally, talk with it, if possible. If the animal spirit does not communicate verbally, follow the traditional rule—if you perceive the animal three times in one journey, and it is friendly toward you, it is your correct medicine. The animal could be one you are familiar with, but sometimes it will be a brand-new ally, and a new agreement and partnership must be made.

Upon receiving the medicine ally's instructions, or the guidance of your own trusted totem, take the medicine ally into your spirit body. Usually one animal medicine is received at a time, though with experience some practitioners get several medicines to make a larger spirit medicine healing formula, particularly when working with plant and stone medicine retrieval. As you return to normal waking consciousness, feel the energy of the ally integrating into your physical body, and thank the ally. Close your sacred space. Record your experience in your Book of Shadows. Explore the animal's medicine in the resources you have, and see how it applies to your current situation. Watch how its lessons play out in your daily life, and notice any changes that occur within you.

At times you may not have the clarity and perspective to journey for your own medicine. Or you may be asked to journey for someone else who either lacks clarity around their own issues, like most of us do, or lacks the skills and experience to journey alone.

In such cases, traditionally the practicing shaman will do a preliminary journey, much like a diagnosis, connecting both to personal guides and to the client's spirit guides, determining through either journey symbolism or direct communication how to handle the situation. I call upon my own higher self and the higher self of my client to facilitate the process. If the diagnosis determines that animal spirit medicine will help the situation, the shamanic practitioner can either return to discuss the situation with the client or, if the client has given prior permission to do a healing, continue on with the healing journey.

To perform a retrieval or diagnosis journey for another, there are several trance positions that can be assumed. I initially learned that the shaman and client should lie down next to each other. Some traditions have the shaman on the client's left, which I prefer, and other traditions have the shaman on the client's right side. I later learned that the practitioner can sit up in a crossed-legged position while the client lies down, the client's head in the lap of the practitioner, cradled in both hands.

If you are retrieving medicine for another, take it into your body as you would for yourself. Some shamans imagine their spirit bag or pouch as a part of their otherworldly self-image, and the medicine is placed in the bag instead. Return from your journey, and be prepared to transfer the medicine into the client.

Each transfer is unique, as each healing is unique, but usually the transfer involves the breath. Listen to your guides and allies, and follow your intuition. I learned to focus on the spirit medicine in me and, with a deep breath, exhale the spirit energy into the client's heart, then crown, and finally the heart again. With a sweeping movement of the arms, the aura is smoothed from crown to feet.

Since my initial shamanic training, I have followed my guidance and found myself blowing spirit medicine in a variety of chakras and patterns, including the soles of the feet. I've smoothed the aura over with crow feathers, smudged incense, anointed oils, and done intuitive gestures and energy work as my guidance has directed. In class I've seen students do healing with gestures and movements that I was not familiar with and did not instruct them in, but they followed their own guidance, and got amazing results from the healing.

Once when I overextended myself during a teaching regime, I partnered with a student in class, and she retrieved Bear medicine for me. She said the bear told her to tell me that I needed a short hibernation, and should take more time to sleep. The student had no conscious knowledge of the fact that I had been working every day in the previous two weeks.

In that same class I had retrieved Crow for someone else who was interested in shamanism and healing, but dreadfully afraid of magick and witchcraft. She didn't realize that I was a witch until the end of this particular class, and we were able to talk about the crow, the Goddess, and the forces of magick. It helped heal her fear of witchcraft and allowed her to see the spirituality in magick. People who need the medicine of your primary totem

allies will seek you out, because you not only carry the medicine, but also strive to live and embody its lessons.

Before journeying for others, you might want to do some more journeying on your own, to explore the realms and make a few more trusted medicine allies. The ones that you ally with will be the ones that the people who seek out your help need. I usually use Crow, Spider, Snake, Stag, and Wolf medicine, and they are some of my most active totems.

New Assignments

- Do Exercise 25 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

Continuing Assignments

- Continue with your dream work and traditional journaling.
- Use shamanic techniques in your exploration of the Wheel of the Year and the seasons.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Be mindful of the energies and allies in your life. Continue to develop your spirit-ally relationships.

Tips

- After receiving spirit medicine, or any type of energetic healing, you might undergo a "healing awareness." Sometimes this awareness is referred to as a "healing crisis," because the physical, mental, and emotional symptoms of whatever you are seeking to heal might intensify before they are alleviated. This intensification occurs because you have accelerated the healing process. Sometimes the physical or energetic bodies want to hold on to the older, more comfortable yet imbalanced patterns. If you are working on healing fear, your sense of fear might intensify before it lessens. The intensity of the process forces you to look at the issues around the healing crisis, and integrate the lessons brought to you by the animal medicine. If your healing is related to a physical illness or injury, the pain may intensify before disappearing. The most common physical symptoms of a healing crisis are the symptoms associated with a cold or flu, including runny nose, cough, general aches, weariness, queasy stomach, and diarrhea. They are all physical signs that your body is purging

unhealthy energetic patterns in your consciousness.

• If you are exploring this material with a study partner or group, offer to do medicine retrievals for each other when you feel ready. This will build your skills for working with others, and also help you see your own issues more clearly, since the medicines brought to you will not be filtered through your own biased perceptions.

• As you gather more animal allies, think about how they may relate to your directional spirit wheel mandala (figure 4). Such correspondences can help you understand how each medicine will work in your personal life, as well as when performing healing magick with others.

• If you do a medicine retrieval for another, make sure that when you return, you actually transfer the spirit medicine energy to them. This is an energetic healing, not just a mental awareness that you can talk about. If you only come back with a message, then relay the message; but if you come back with a spirit energy, then you must transfer it to the proper recipient. You were not journeying for yourself, but for another, and if you hold on to that person's medicine, you will become unbalanced and sick. In one of my classes, I had a student who thought she had only to tell her partner about the spirit animal, but did not do a ritual to transfer the energy. As the workshop continued, she grew pale and nauseous. We talked, and when I realized what had happened, I asked her to transfer the energy to her partner with my help. She recovered completely and immediately, because letting go of the energy brought her back into balance.

[contents]

13

Lesson Nine
Plant, Stone, and Song Medicine

Everything is energy. Everything has a vibration. Everything has spirit. Everything has healing energy, medicine that can be used to manifest health. Many of our holistic-medicine and alternative-health trends, including homeopathy, flower essences, crystals, and Reiki, use the concept of vibrational healing to restore balance. Shamanic healers throughout the ages have understood this, not only using these substances, but also building a personal relationship with each spirit medicine. Each vibration is like a song, a dance, a movement of consciousness that is a sacred magick. All animals, plants, trees, and stones have this power. Our medicine allies are waiting for us to awaken to them and partner with their spirit to create a better world for us all.

Plant Spirit Medicine

Just as animal spirits are guides to a shamanic witch, plant spirits also act as allies. Herbal-oriented witches sometimes discover that their first totem is a plant rather than an animal. Plants hold both literal and spiritual medicine. Plants that contain physical medicines are usually referred to as herbs, and have a long history of use among the wise ones of all lands. Witchcraft is traditionally associated with herbcraft and natural healing. Popularized in the works of author Raven Grimassi, particularly *The Witches' Craft,* we know the Greek word associated with witch was *pharmakis,* the root of our modern word pharmacist, describing one who has knowledge of plant medicine. Similarly, the later Latin word for witch was *venefica,* associating one who practices witchcraft with the knowledge of poisonous plants. Many of the most spiritual and magickal plants are potentially toxic. The word venefica is associated with Venus as well as venom, and can be linked to practitioners of love magick and knowledge of aphrodisiacs. Perhaps the poisoning was not of

the body, but of the heart, through love potions.

Many herbs contain chemicals that create a change within human physiology. They are the basis of our ancient and modern medicines. Though science has done a good job of isolating and synthesizing the active components in plants for pharmaceuticals, there is something missing in modern pharmacology. Many people are returning to a holistic way of thinking, and using whole herbs rather than synthesized drugs. Witches know that a powerful form of holistic healing magick occurs when the whole natural plant is used. Besides the active compounds, each plant has many other chemical components that seem extraneous, but everything has a purpose. We simply don't understand them scientifically, yet they play a role in balancing and moderating the more active ingredients. Many plants have demonstrated great results among herbalists, but scientists have not yet been able to isolate an active agent in these plants. Some plants don't seem to have that many active or powerful agents, yet they still heal. How?

The answer is plant spirit medicine. Each plant has its own spirit medicine that is intimately tied to its shape, color, habitat, and medicinal actions. We discover a plant's medicine much like we explore animal medicine, through a mix of research, intuition, and direct spirit contact.

Plant spirit medicine works on all levels holistically, not just on the physical level. Plant spirit healing can work on the emotional, mental, and soul levels of consciousness, to get to the root of any health issue. Each plant has its own intelligence, what we previously called its deva, guiding its use. The herbalist, healer, witch, and shaman have a relationship not only with the physical plant, but also with its spirit. The stronger and more intimate that partnership, the more amazing magick the witch can create. If there is no relationship with the plant spirit, its chemical actions can still work, but the effects are much less potent or spiritually transforming.

Plant medicine knows how to bring natural balance. Yarrow, for example, can be used medicinally to thicken or thin the blood, among other uses. A pharmaceutical can do one or the other, but usually not both. Yarrow knows which action to take to normalize blood flow and bring a healthy balance. How does it know what you need? The plant spirit knows, working with your own consciousness.

Plant spirit medicine is so powerful that you don't even have to physically ingest or apply the plant material through the traditional teas, tinctures, oils, and ointments. By having a strong relationship with the plant, you can administer it much like animal spirit medicine. In a healing session with a very ill man who had one lung, cancer, and very painful water retention in his legs, ankles, and feet, I administered the spirit medicine of yarrow. While in an altered state of consciousness during the session, yarrow's spirit came to me and suggested its use. Yarrow can be used as a diaphoretic, to induce sweating and remove excess water. The man had already been told by his doctor not to take herbal medications, and in fact with his multiple prescriptions, the professional herbalists he consulted were wary of administering yarrow tea or tincture. I was, too. But his traditional medications were not doing anything for his water retention. So when I evoked the spirit of yarrow, I asked it for only its diaphoretic properties, and to work to bring healing and balance to my client, without harm, for the highest good. The yarrow spirit agreed.

The man left my office without feeling any noticeable difference, but by the evening he began to sweat, and continued to sweat profusely for about four days. The water drained from his joints. His doctors couldn't explain it and feared that if he kept it up, he would soon be dehydrated. The sweating stopped as soon as his joints reached a normal level, and his comfort increased greatly. Such experiences are not common, but are quite possible in healing work. I did a journey afterward to thank the yarrow spirit for its help.

Plant Partnerships

For the most part, the healing chemicals in plants do very little for the plant itself. Why then, are so many plants filled with these potent compounds? The plant's physical role in the web of life is to provide this healing balance for physical beings, both animal and human, to build a bridge between the worlds of animals, humans, and plants.

Spiritually, plant spirits also desire to serve and partner with our spiritual selves. They have aspects embodied in the Middle, Lower, and Upper Worlds. I've found plant spirits in all three realms. Those who contact plant spirits on the shamanic level help the plants build bridges extending to all the worlds. We

truly act as partners, and they truly want to work with humanity. If you don't believe me, ask them.

It may sound crazy talking to a plant, but if we believe that all things are alive and contain an intelligence, then the walkers between worlds should be able to contact these spirits. It's much easier to do than most people think. Modern scientists, with their trial and error method of deductive reasoning, must really wonder how witches and shamans gathered their herbal lore. It seems unlikely that they obtained this information through trial and error. The witches and shamans noticed animals ingesting certain plants, but still, many strange concoctions of plants have been used throughout history for healing. If you were sick, and went to the local "wise" woman who was experimenting, and she unknowingly gave you something poisonous, would you or the rest of the tribe go back to her? Probably not. I wouldn't wait for her to get it right. So how was this information made available? The wisdom came directly from the plants.

Modern tribal people tell anthropologists that they received their information on plant medicine through the plants and spirits themselves. They learned to mix together plants unrelated in type and location, to neutralize poisons, and to create medicines and ritual sacraments. The only way they could know which of the thousands of local plants to combine is through direct revelation. These tribal people can distinguish between different species that look almost identical to the eye of a trained botanist, and say they do so by listening to each plant's unique "song." These songs are the plants' medicine, their energetic vibration. Witches and shamans learned their lore from the plants—intellectually from observing the Principle of Correspondence and the Doctrine of Signatures in action, but also psychically, directly from the plant spirits.

Through my study of flower essences, a modern look at plant spirit medicine, I had an experience with plant spirit communication. Flower essences come to us through the modern discipline of homeopathy, using dilute solutions of substances to bring balance. A twentieth-century homeopathist, Dr. Edward Bach, pioneered the use of dilute solutions of flowers to bring balance to the mind and emotions, now known as the Bach Flower Remedies. Though described as a part of holistic health and modern medicine, the use of similar substances can be found in alchemy and magickal herbalism. When looked at through a magickal eye, the use of flower essences is very shamanic. They

contain so little chemical content that a laboratory might not find any physical plant matter in a dose. Yet, energetically, the water solution carries the spiritual imprint of the plant. For this reason, they are called vibrational essences or remedies, because they restore a balance to your spiritual vibration, which in turn produces healing on all levels.

In my flower essence training, we were encouraged to sit down and spend time with a plant. I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I chose what would later be a great ally to me—yarrow. I didn't read up on yarrow at all. I sat down, got into a meditative state, and asked to speak to the plant spirit. I got my messages through words, images, and vague impressions, but first and foremost I was aware of the space between myself and the plant. It seemed to be pushing me away, to get more room. I thought the plant spirit didn't want me to talk to it, so I started moving away. It "called" me back and said it was teaching me about its power. It was welcoming, but I definitely felt a boundary between us. Then it let me into its space, and I felt very safe and protected, like being in a bubble made from tiny, white flowers. I saw images of cracked eggs becoming whole. I was a bit confused by my impressions.

When I looked up yarrow in flower essence books, I learned that its essence is taken to create healthy boundaries. It protects your space. Its signature is that it grows by the edges of roads and gardens, protecting boundaries. As the medicinal properties regulate the flow of blood, the spirit regulates the flow of energy in the aura. If your boundary is contracted, it loosens it. If your aura is too expansive, it brings it closer and helps define the edge, creating protection. The herb is used to clot blood flow from wounds, making it a favorite among both warriors and avid hikers. Yarrow essence seals holes in the aura, giving you many of the benefits of the aura clearing meditation from *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* (Exercise 24). Hence the cracked egg becoming whole in my spirit vision. The yarrow spirit communicated all of this to me, though in a different form. Since my initial encounter with yarrow, I've continued to speak with plants and refine my communication skills, getting clearer, more direct messages. I am always amazed when my impressions match those of another practitioner. Sometimes my impressions are completely different, as each plant might have different uses for each practitioner.

Communicating with a plant is the first step in building a spirit medicine

relationship with it. Working with living plants in the Middle World, at least initially, can be easier. As you develop your skills, you can repeat this exercise, journeying in the Middle World to find plants that are not growing near you, or visiting the worlds above and below for different otherworldly plant spirits.

Exercise 26

Plant Spirit Communication

1. Find a plant with which you wish to communicate. I suggest a plant outdoors and in the wild, but houseplants and cultivated gardens work well too. Simply choose a plant that speaks to you in this moment. You will be drawn to the plant ally that is right for you.

2. Sit or lie down near the plant and get comfortable. You can assume a shamanic trance posture if you desire.

3. Start Exercise 1: Entering a Meditative State to get into your magickal mindset. You could even do Exercise 6: Tree Breathing to get your energy flowing. You could also cast a circle around yourself and the plant, but it's not necessary.

4. Ask to connect to the consciousness of the plant. You can ask for the deva, nature spirit, faery, or any form you feel is appropriate for you. I simply ask for the plant spirit ally and let it take whatever form it desires. I call upon my higher self and spirit guides to aid the process. Sometimes another guide will facilitate the experience to make it clearer or to prevent the energy from being overwhelming.

5. Feel your energy mingle with that of the plant. Feel the boundaries between you and the plant dissolve away, giving you both access to exchange information. Feel the plant's presence and personality. Each plant will feel different.

6. Ask your plant any questions you have about its spirit medicine, powers, and abilities. Ask how you can best partner with it, and if indeed it does want to partner with you. Don't assume that it does. Allow the information to come to you in whatever way is appropriate. You will find that just as some people are more visual, auditory, or sensory, some plants have their own affinities. Some communicate primarily through one sense.

7. When done, thank the plant spirit for this time. Some witches leave an offering, as they would for a harvesting ritual. Return yourself to normal consciousness. Ground yourself and close the space as needed. Immediately record your impressions in your Book of Shadows for future study.

Different aspects of the plant spirit can give you different kinds of information. Usually the nature spirit of the Middle World will give you more practical and medicinal information. The higher spirit or deva will give more spiritual information, while the lower spirits or faery guardians have a variety of lore, and sometimes teach through riddle and story. You may be personally "keyed in" to one of the three realms more than the others. Honor your connection, and listen to its wisdom.

If you haven't completed exercise 26 yet and don't want to have a biased opinion of any specific plant, skip this next section until later. The following is a list of some very helpful plant spirit medicines. Use this as the basis for your own knowledge when seeking out plant allies, and add to it through your own research, experience, and affinities.

Though most "traditional" books on the craft focus exclusively on European herbs, as a witch living in the Northeast of the United States, I like to work with the plant medicine of species that grow in my area as well as traditional witch herbs. Explore your own environment and see what is available to you.

Aconite

Aconite is also known as monkshood and wolfsbane. As an herb, it is dangerously poisonous and is used as a weapon. Hunters would tip their arrows in aconite to kill off marauding wolves that threatened their town, which is how it earned one of its folk names and is why it was later associated with warding off werewolves. Witches reportedly used it in flying ointment. While it normally would kill you, when used in a small enough dose, the effect of being partially poisoned helps push your spirit loose from your body, creating the flying feeling of a near-death experience. One could use it to travel easily into the spirit worlds. Sacred to Hecate, the Underworld goddess, aconite can be used as a spirit medicine to attune to the dark goddess, for protection and to face fears. It promotes introspection and finding your own inner divinity. *Do not ingest—toxic.*

Angelica

Angelica spirit medicine is much like its name. It connects you to heavenly Upper World forces for guidance and protection, particularly the angels. Angelica is the power of divine, otherworldly love and healing. *Correct identification is critical as angelica closely resembles water hemlock, which is very poisonous.*

Basil

Basil is traditionally a love herb, but the spirit medicine is used to heal our attitudes toward sexuality. It helps balance our sexual energy, and lets us express it in a healthy manner without being overwhelmed by its power. Basil is also used in India for purification and protection.

Blackberry

Blackberry is another herb of protection and healing sacred to the dark goddesses. Its spirit medicine is for facing primal fears and working with the shadows of the dark self.

Black-Eyed Susan

Black-Eyed Susan, yellow-orange with a dark center, is the spirit medicine used to help integrate our repressed shadow self. It brings light to the darkness to aid us in acknowledging, integrating, and healing the shadow. *Use caution if you have sensitive skin.*

Bleeding Heart

Like its name and shape imply, the power of Bleeding Heart is for the heartbroken. Its energy heals us when we have been wounded in relationships with our family, friends, or lovers.

Catnip

Catnip spirit medicine helps us attune to our animal instincts, and in particular attune to cat totems and feline goddesses, such as the Egyptian Bast. It helps those in an urban environment attune to the natural world that still exists around them.

Chamomile

As an herb, chamomile relaxes us and promotes sleep. As a spirit medicine, it increases vital healing energy by helping us rest, relax, and replenish our

energy. It alleviates insomnia and elevates the mood. *Caution, ragweed allergy sufferers.*

Chickweed

Chickweed is influenced by both the moon and stars, and is sometimes known as starweed. It is cooling and soothing when we are inflamed or enraged. Traditionally its medicine connects the recipient to bird spirits.

Cinquefoil

Cinquefoil is a countermagick herb. Also known as witch grass or five-fingered grass, it is used to undo curses and charms. As a spirit medicine, Cinquefoil is used to help others understand your point of view, or alternatively, for you to understand another's point of view.

Comfrey

Comfrey medicine is the energy of regeneration and structure. Comfrey as an herb rebuilds tissue, and its spirit medicine restores our energy, clearing past karma while encouraging us to take responsibility for our issues. Past-life exploration is facilitated by Comfrey medicine. *Correct identification is critical. Do not ingest, as some studies suggest it is carcinogenic in large doses.*

Daffodil

Daffodil lets us hear and speak in the spirit world. Known as the divine trumpet, we can relate to our guides and teachers, as well as other humans, with the power of this plant.

Dandelion

The blessings of Dandelion are many. It is used to heal anger, bring happiness, clear toxins (physical and energetic), and help us remain rooted and grounded in our personal power.

Foxglove

Foxglove medicine is for the heart. As its chemical components are used to make cardiac medicines, its spirit components heal the heart. It is particularly powerful for people who feel love deeply, yet don't open their heart and express their feelings to their loved ones. Foxglove is also connected to the faery realm, as faeries are said to wear the flowers as gloves. *Do not ingest. For use by physicians only. Correct identification is critical as first-year*

foxglove leaves resemble comfrey.

Henbane

The magick of Henbane is used to help bridge the gap between the lands of the living and the dead, improving mediumship abilities and facilitating shamanic journey to the Underworld. *Toxic. Do not ingest.*

Juniper

Juniper is a protection and prosperity herb. In its shamanic form, it is protective against self-destructive tendencies. Through examining such patterns, you help heal and transform them. *Potentially toxic. Use only under the guidance of a health care professional. Do not use if you are pregnant or lactating or if you have cardiovascular disease.*

Lady's Mantle

An herb of alchemists, lady's mantle has many powers. As a spirit medicine, it connects you to the Earth Mother and helps you manifest and amplify your magick in the real world. Lady's Mantle medicine is the healing power of the divine feminine. It develops intuition and emotional expression. It aids with all issues of fertility and heals all issues related to feminine sexuality and a woman's reproductive system.

Lavender

Lavender medicine is alternatively soothing for those who are agitated or stimulating to those who are tired or depressed. Lavender spirit medicine helps you see the good in a situation, looking for the blessing or lesson.

Lemon Balm

Lemon Balm medicine brings a soothing lightness to times of difficulty. It lifts the mood and soothes emotional pain, and is very helpful when you take things too seriously or carry too much responsibility.

Lobelia

Lobelia is a powerful respiratory herb also known as Indian tobacco. Its spirit medicine helps us communicate, but also helps us breathe easier when afraid or tense. *Use only with professional supervision. Lobelia causes nausea and is potentially toxic in large doses.*

Loosestrife

Loosestrife, particularly purple loosestrife, grows wild, often taking over an entire area. Its medicine is the power to function and flow with chaos when life seems overwhelming.

Mandrake

Mandrake is a powerful amplification herb. Mandrake spirit medicine helps with fertility issues, acts as an aphrodisiac, and grants visions, protection, and power. Mandrake medicine can act as a spirit teacher itself in the ways of the craft, manifesting in your spirit vision as a doll-sized person made from the root of the plant. European folk tales said that mandrake only grew unnaturally, on the spot where a man was hung, supposedly where his ejaculate struck the ground, creating the associations as a fertility charm, aphrodisiac, and gateway to the land of the dead. *Do not ingest—poisonous.*

Milkweed

The milky sap of a milkweed plant is said to cure warts and skin conditions. Its spirit medicine is symbolized in the milky liquid, as milk is a nourishing substance associated with the divine feminine. Milkweed medicine helps us learn to nourish and care for ourselves. It also helps heal digestive issues. Those with problems around weight, eating disorders, and oral addictions can be aided through Milkweed spirit. *Do not ingest—toxic.*

Money Plant

Money plant is also known as lunaria, as in “lunar,” because its seeds are in a flat, circular, paperlike capsule resembling a full moon. Also known as silver dollar plant, Money Plant medicine helps you create and accept prosperity and blessings in your life.

Mugwort

A traditional magick herb sacred to the moon and Artemis, Mugwort’s spiritual healing properties help develop psychic abilities in those who desire to, and integrate such abilities in those who have great psychic ability but lack the ability to adequately control their talents. Mugwort aids in dream work and in finding harmony in emotions. *Contact with mugwort may cause dermatitis. Do not take if pregnant or lactating.*

Mullein

The mullein has bright yellow flowers on a torchlike stalk. Traditionally dried mullein stalks are covered with wax and set alight on Samhain as hag's tapers. Mullein brings light and awareness into consciousness to see and understand one's higher purpose. *Contact with mullein may cause skin irritation. Do not ingest.*

Nightshade

The variety of nightshade plants are steeped in magickal lore. Their spirit medicines are used to get in touch with your spirituality, open the chakras, and expand consciousness. Herbally most nightshade plants are poisonous. *Do not ingest—toxic.*

Pennyroyal

Pennyroyal oil was traditionally used in initiation ceremonies to raise the vibration and open the individual spiritually. Its spirit medicine does much the same. It helps cleanse the aura and subtle bodies. The oil is also protective, both spiritually and physically, against insects. *Pennyroyal should never be used by pregnant women. Ingesting pennyroyal oil can be lethal.*

Peppermint

Peppermint medicine clears and refreshes the mind, bringing greater awareness and perception. Peppermint creates a better sense of communication and clarity between people and groups. *Contact with peppermint can cause dermatitis. Pregnant women should use only in moderation. Peppermint essential oil should be used with caution—diluted and in small amounts.*

Queen Anne's Lace

Known as wild carrot, Queen Anne's Lace opens the third eye and physical eyes, helping us see what we need to see, which is not always what we want to see. Its deep root helps us remain grounded to use this new information. *Do not confuse with poisonous hemlock.*

Rose

The power of Rose is very spiritual. It is used to elevate the consciousness of those who receive it, to know the power of unconditional love and healing.

Rose is sacred to all love goddesses.

Rue

Rue is known as the herb of grace, and is historically known to protect the user from curses and malicious magick. It protects when we shamanically journey and aligns the user with the higher self. Rue safely opens spirit gateways and is sacred to the moon goddess. Its spirit medicine is used to accept yourself, your body, and your true desires in the material world without conflict with your spiritual values. *Contact with rue can cause dermatitis. Pregnant women should avoid contact with rue.*

Solomon's Seal

Herbally this root resembles the spine and tendons, and is used to heal them, encouraging tight tissue to relax and loose tissue to tighten. Energetically the medicine of Solomon's Seal is used to help us adapt, relaxing and tightening the energy bodies as needed. It helps the recipient change and adapt when feeling rigid or stuck. It is also magickally protective.

Spiderwort

Spiderwort is a plant of sensitivity, helping those who are overly sensitive to environmental factors. Also known as Widow's Tear, this medicine can be used to heal grief and sadness of all kinds.

St. John's Wort

St. John's wort is a powerful and sacred plant used for protection. It illuminates the soul in times of darkness and depression. It protects the spirit when dreaming or doing shamanic journey. It elevates the mood and heals all manner of shock and trauma. St. John's Wort is divine light in a five-pointed flower. *Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun if ingested.*

Toadflax

A traditional flying-ointment herb associated with toads and witches, the spirit medicine of toadflax is used to help one understand and accept other people's views, particularly other spiritual or religious views. It gives a higher perspective and bigger picture. Traditional lore says it attracts toads, but I'm not sure I believe it.

Vervain

Vervain is the witch's herb, used for many types of magick. Though the spirit medicine is used for clearing the mind and getting centered when you feel worried and concerned, it can also be used for protection, relationship healing, purification, and to promote psychic ability. Vervain is sacred to the faery folk and Druidic traditions.

Vetch

Vetch is a binding weed notorious for getting caught in farming equipment. As a magickal herb, it is used for binding and protection magick. Its spirit medicine is for those who feel stuck or bound.

Vinca

Also known as Periwinkle or Sorcerer's Violet, Vinca opens the third eye, but as a low-growing vine keeps us grounded in reality, to use our abilities in a practical and helpful way. Vinca has been used in traditional love magick. *Do not use if pregnant or lactating.*

Water Lily

The shape of the water lily is much like the blooming of a chakra lotus as it spins open. White Water Lily spirit medicine is used to open the crown chakra to greater levels of awareness or enlightenment. *Large doses are toxic.*

Witch Hazel

By its very name, witch hazel is magickal. It is used medicinally as an astringent, and spiritually it brings balance to the energy bodies. When you look at its leaves, one side is larger than the other. Witch Hazel brings harmony when yin/yang, male/female, or logic/emotion are out of balance. It also helps those who feel different to accept their individuality.

Wormwood

A main ingredient in absinthe, wormwood is the power of purging. It kills off parasites in the intestinal tract, but can be somewhat dangerous to use medicinally. Spiritually, Wormwood purges parasitic energies, clearing the aura and subtle bodies, but it can be emotionally harsh. I only call upon this spirit medicine when necessary. *Small doses may cause nervous disorders/convulsions. Wormwood is toxic.*

Yarrow

Yarrow spirit medicine is the gift of the warrior. The warrior establishes and defends boundaries. Yarrow helps us establish energetic and emotional boundaries in our life. It strengthens the aura and heals old energetic wounds. *Large, frequent doses over a long period of time could be harmful. Contact with yarrow may cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating.*

Although each spirit medicine might have corresponding attributes to the plant's physical and medicinal qualities, you should always check with a qualified medical herbal resource, book, or practitioner to know how to use herbal medicine safely and effectively. This is only a guide to spirit medicine. To draw on more traditional lore, you can explore the spirit medicine of the trees found in the ogham script. Their magickal correspondences fit quite well with their healing qualities.

The traditional Wiccan Poem of Nine Woods can also give us more clues to the magick of tree medicine (Figure 32). Nine woods show up in a lot of European folklore, though depending on the location and time, the list of woods might be different. The common element that I see in the folklore is the number nine. Nine, or sometimes seven for the seven planets or chakras, shows up again and again in references to trees and herbs. Here we have nine tree spirit allies, for the nine directions of our spirit mandala, whether such an image was consciously worked with or intuitively known. I encourage people to work with the number nine in spirit medicine, finding nine trees, nine herbal allies, nine animal spirits, and nine stones.

Nine woods in the cauldron go, burn them fast and burn them slow.
Birch into the fire goes, to represent what the Lady knows.
Oak gives the forest might, in the fire brings the God's insight.
Rowan is the tree of power, causing life and magic to flower.
Willows at the waterside stand, to aid the journey to Summerland.
Hawthorn is buried to purify, and draw faery to your eye.
Hazel, the tree of wisdom and learning, adds its strength to the bright fire burning.
White are the flowers of the apple tree, that brings us the fruits of fertility.
Grapes that grow upon the vine, giving us both joy and wine.
Fir does mark the evergreen, to represent immortality unseen.
Elder is the Lady's tree, burn it not, or cursed you'll be.

Figure 32: *Poem of Nine Woods*

Like animals, plants can come in and out of your life as messengers. If others mention a plant name or give you a plant, or you find yourself fascinated with a particular plant, either in its lore or perhaps craving the taste of an herb, think about its spirit medicine. If you have a yard, certain plants will be attracted to your home and will spring up unbidden. In a time when I needed protection, common nightshade, a plant medicine I associate with protection and purging, popped up in my garden. Think about how prevalent dandelions are, at least in my neck of the woods, and how well our society in general deals with anger issues.

Using Plant Spirit Medicine

Plant spirit medicine is used much the same way as animal spirit medicine. You can retrieve it for yourself or for others by journeying to the other worlds. Transfer the spirit medicine to another as you would transfer animal medicine, using breath and ritual, following your own intuitive guidance and the plant spirit's directions.

You can learn more about its medicine by communicating with the plant spirit, letting it reveal its secrets to you. Instead of having an animal fetish, you can make a plant charm, carrying a small bag or bottle of the plant. If you desire, you can take a small amount of the plant daily as an herbal essence, flower essence, tincture, or tea for as long as you are working to integrate the plant spirit's lessons into your life. Make sure the plant is nontoxic and can be administered safely (see the section "Safe Ways to Work with Powerful Plant Spirits" later in this chapter).

Some shamanic practitioners of plant spirit medicine believe you must journey with the living plant before you can call upon its medicine. You either meditate with it physically present or shamanically journey to somewhere in the Middle World where it is physically present. Though I believe having a direct relationship with the spirit is best, I have had some plant allies make their presence known before I had an opportunity to meet with them physically.

I have also found plant allies in the other worlds, in the Lower and Upper Worlds. I've found specific locations that have called to me to be areas of healing. At certain times I've encountered an Underworld moon, and on the dark side of this moon is a magickal garden filled with earthly and unearthly

plants. With the garden's guardian spirit's permission, I am allowed to partner with and then pick these plant medicines, sometimes singly and other times in combination, to bring healing to another, without having formed relationships with the plants prior to picking them. My students have reported finding plants that have no equivalent in the Middle World. They worked with mythic plants to harness unusual and otherworldly medicines. While many beings have three selves, some spirit medicines exist in only one or two realms.

Certain special plants can play a pivotal role in your spiritual development, through your choice or theirs, sometimes manifesting as a simple affinity for the plant. They become your plant totem guides.

Exercise 27

Plant Spirit Medicine Retrieval Journey

Just as you retrieved animal spirit medicine in Exercise 25, apply the same technique but with the intention of finding plant spirit medicine. Prepare yourself for the journey by creating sacred space and starting your journey music. Hold the intention for the "plant spirit medicine that is correct and good at this time for me." Usually you will connect first with a trusted animal guide, who will then lead you to your plant spirit medicine. Communicate with the plant as if it were physically present, much like you did in Exercise 26.

If the plant agrees, and your guidance urges you to do so, take the plant spirit medicine into your body. When you return, feel the energy of the ally integrating into your physical body. Thank the ally as you return to normal consciousness. Close your sacred space. Record your experience in your Book of Shadows. Explore the plant's medicine in the resources you have, and see how it applies to your current situation. Watch how its lessons play out in your daily life, and notice any changes occurring within you.

Intoxicants and Flying Ointments

Any discussion of shamanic plant medicine and herbal witchcraft would not be complete without mentioning psychedelics, ritual sacraments, and the witch's flying ointments. The use of mushrooms and other hallucinogenic plants to aid in the journeying process is a classic part of witchcraft and shamanism.

Native traditions across the world have had the ritual use of hallucinogenic

plants to aid in initiation and shamanic journey. The main difference between Native traditions of psychedelic use and many modern users of psychedelics is a full understanding and relationship with the psychedelic plant ally. In Native traditions, these substances are not used recreationally, as many use them in the modern Western world. Traditional Wicca, as one of the eight ways of power and inducing altered states, includes a method of "opening the gates." Opening the gates refers to opening our perceptions to the unseen world, to pierce the veil between the physical and the spiritual. It usually involves the sacramental use of wine, incense, oils, smoking herbs, and potentially a wide array of mind-altering substances. Some versions of the Gardnerian Book of Shadows have instructions on using cannabis and mushrooms, as well as formulas for particular incenses and oils.

The term "flying ointment" conjures up images of witches literally flying through the air on brooms, on the backs of fantastic creatures or simply through levitation, but the reality is quite different. The flying induced by substances known as flying ointments, also called witch's salve or *unguentum sabbati,* refers to astral flight or shamanic journey, not literal, physical, gravity-defying flight. During the persecutions, the medieval witches were said to fly to their sabbat gatherings. Perhaps they did, but in spirit, not body. The name flying ointment and its use have created much of the confusion and misinformation associated with witchcraft.

In the classic magickal text *The Book of the Sacred Magick of Abramelin the Mage: as delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his son Lamech* (dated 1458, but translated into English in the modern era by S. L. MacGregor Mathers), Abraham tells the reader of his experiences before meeting Abramelin, including an encounter with an Austrian witch. She used an ointment with him, and he experimented with various forms of astral travel. Ultimately, like in so many stories of that era, the witch reveals that the ointment was a gift to her from the devil, and Abraham leaves her to seek out the more pious magick of Abramelin. The text does show that magickal seekers of that era knew about such ointments, and did not confuse them with literal, physical flying, but rather a soul flight. Our modern drug culture uses similar words to describe psychedelic experiences, with the words "getting high" or "taking a trip."

The European witch's flying ointments were concoctions of herbs to aid astral travel, such as poplar and cinquefoil, along with more poisonous herbs such as

mandrake, monkshood and belladonna, to help “propel” the spirit out of the physical vessel. In certain doses they are hallucinogenic, but with very toxic side effects, and there is a razor-thin line between astral flying and death. Some propose that prolonged use, particularly of the European plants, even under ideal circumstances can cause derangement, giving us the archetype of the crazed witch.

The various translations of folk names for plants make it difficult to decipher which exact herbs are given in the old formulas. Folk names differ from region to region, and sometimes herbalist to herbalist. Other ingredients in both traditional and modern versions of flying ointment include henbane, sweet flag, poppy juice, foxglove, wild celery, fennel, saffron, watercress, and parsley. Water hemlock is often a listed ingredient, and some use an infusion of it to consecrate the athame. I believe it’s a highly toxic and dangerous plant to work with on any level and don’t recommend its use. Though I’ve used a weak aconite tea to anoint tools myself, I recommend safe substitutes, such as washes of vervain or frankincense and myrrh.

Records from the Burning Times have formulas with sensational ingredients as well, most notably baby fat, from children either unbaptized or dragged from their grave. Witches most likely used animal fat. Modern witches use beeswax, lanolin, and various vegetable oils. Bat’s blood is a popular ingredient too, which may have referred to a plant folk name, as some call holly leaves bat’s wings, but it’s possible it could have referred to actual bat’s blood, using the power of correspondence with flight in a flying ointment. Frogs and toads are also potential ingredients, possibly referring to the psychoactive secretions of some species of frogs. Perhaps this is why the toad is one of the classic animal familiars of the medieval witch. Ash is also used in the ointment to darken it. Modern witches use ashes from spells and sacred wood fires from the fire festivals such as Beltane and Samhain, if using ash at all.

The herbal ointment was smeared on the bare skin, face, temples, brow, armpits, palms, soles of the feet, and, some people conjecture, on broom handles so that in broom fertility rituals, the broom between the naked legs could be used to apply ointment to the thin, sensitive, blood-rich skin of the genitalia, entering the bloodstream quickly and possibly even activating the chakra column with stimulation to the root. This practice could be the source of

the titillating image conjured up by the inquisitors of the devil using the broom handle as an initiatory dildo for Satanic witches.

The broom, or besom, usually used to sweep the traditional Wiccan circle and for fertility rituals, is hinted at in the mythology as a tool for shamanic flight, acting as a mount. Along with the broom, the staff, the two-pronged stang, and the distaff (a tool used for spinning and weaving) are also considered to be flying steeds in classic witch texts. The wood of such tools is a connection to the World Tree. Unlike most modern images, the classical witch's broom had the bristles in the front of the rider. Some think this is because flight in the spirit world is backwards, keeping with our reversed mirror image for the other side of the veil. Other traditional visions give us totem animals and mythic beasts as shamanic steeds. In Mongolian shamanism, a shamanic "steed" was crafted out of broom material.

The paths the witch's shamanic flight takes are linked to the paths of power connecting the sacred sites, the ley lines. These ley lines create a network of pathways known as "royal roads," "death roads," or "second roads" through the astral plane. Traveler gods between the worlds, such as Odin/Wotan, Holda, and Hel, are associated with such paths. When viewed from above, these pathways can be perceived as strands of a great web, in the hands of the weaver goddess. The various paths and gateways open and close corresponding with the seasonal holidays, and link the traveler to the various lands above, below, and between.

Power Plants

The range of many plant medicines, both physical and spiritual, can be loosely categorized in three ways. Some plants infuse life force within us, bolstering our natural systems and energies. Other plants push the life force out, and can fend off unwanted energies and infections within us. These plants are toxic and cause a purging reaction within us. Potentially they can be lethal to us in the wrong amount.

Hallucinogenics are the third group, ranging between the first two. Technically we should refer to them in a magickal sense as psychedelic. The word hallucinogenic refers to a distorting of normal perceptions of reality, while psychedelic means an altering or expanding of consciousness, not necessarily

an illusion or delusion. It's a fine line for some, but for our purposes, we believe in the possibility of expanding into new worlds. From this perspective, these plants push part of your life force out, bringing your awareness to another level of consciousness beyond the physical. They can have healing effects at times, and are not necessarily toxic, but again can be potentially lethal in the wrong dose. There is a fine line between pushing your energy partially out of the body and completely out of the body.

Much of this information regarding life force and plant magick came to me via my training as a flower essence consultant, from my instructor at Delta Gardens, but I later found similar information in the article "The Twelve Windows of Plant Perception" by Richard Katz and Patricia Kaminski of the world-renowned Flower Essence Society. The focus of the information I learned was not only on life force, but on the geometry of flowers, specifically on five-petalled flowers. Many flowers with the five-petalled geometry act as a gateway for energy and life force. These flowers open a gate and can invoke or banish life force from the physical plane. The healing plants draw in life force to stimulate healing, while the poisonous plants banish life force. Some range between these two extremes, helping banish a portion of the life force, to aid in shamanic journey, though they are not necessarily lethal when used properly.

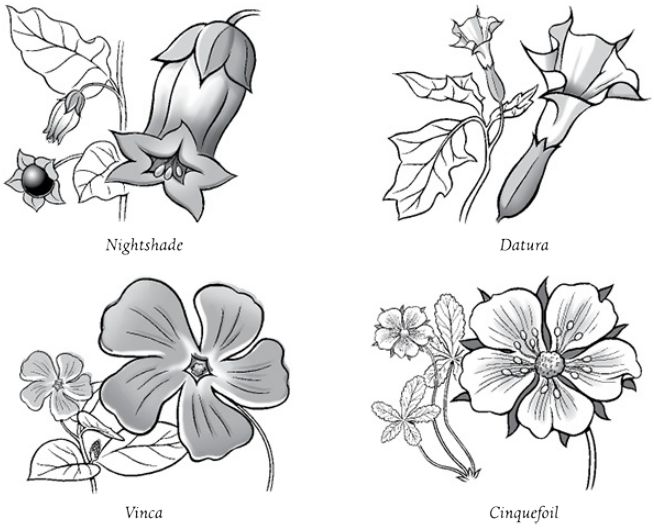


Figure 33: *Five-Petalled Flowers—Nightshade, Datura, Vinca, Cinquefoil*

To a witch or magician, the power of these five-petalled flowers should immediately bring to mind the ritual use of the pentagram. The pentagram acts as a gateway, drawn to open a sacred space to certain energies and drawn in

other ways to banish and close a sacred space to certain energies (*OTOW,* exercise 7). When the gateway is closed, it is the pentagram of protection. Even the human body, with two arms, two legs, and a head—the geometry of the pentagram—is a gateway for life force to incarnate. Energy comes into the world, grows, manifests, and then returns to the spirit world. Flower geometry is important in spirit medicine. As five petals are the gateway of life force in or out, six points, based on the hexagram, have a pattern of integration. Four petals indicate balance. These patterns are another example of the Principle of Correspondence in action (*ITOW,* chapter 8).

The five-petalled flowers can be found in witchcraft and shamanism (Figure 33). Five-petalled flowers are sacred to the Goddess, particularly Venus, as the number five is associated with both the goddess Venus and the planet Venus. Inanna was one of the first goddesses linked to the planet Venus, and she is a shamanic goddess, descending into the Underworld to return again.

The use of belladonna in flying ointment is one of the most popular uses of five-petalled flowers in medieval witchcraft. A variety of plants in the Solanaceae family contain what are known as the belladonna alkaloids. Belladonna, or deadly nightshade, is the best known of these plants, though many of its cousins are associated with witchcraft and magick, including mandrake, henbane, and datura.

Deadly nightshade's Latin name, *Atropa belladonna,* has many feminine, goddess associations. Atropos is the fate goddess who cuts the thread of life at the moment of death, one of the three weavers in Greek mythology. Her name literally means "inevitable" or "unalterable." Belladonna means "beautiful lady," coming from a time period when women in Italy used nightshade tinctures to dilate their pupils for sexual allure. The energy of this plant has a strong, dark, sexual element to it, much like the Dark Goddess herself. The less poisonous plants common nightshade *(Solanum americanum);* bittersweet nightshade, also known as climbing nightshade *(Solanum dulcamara)* or woody nightshade *(Celastrus scandens);* and black nightshade *(Solanum nigrum)* can be used as a substitute for the more deadly belladonna. Herbalists disagree on the toxicity and danger level of bittersweet and common nightshade, but I feel it is best to err on the side of caution and never take it internally. Enchanter's nightshade *(Circaea quadrisulcata),* named after the sorceress Circe and a member of the evening primrose family, is not an

adequate substitution, being a two-petalled flower, not five.

Mandrake's Latin name, *Atropa mandragora,* has the same roots, since they are related. It's important to note that traditional European mandrake is entirely different from American mandrake, or May apple *(Podophyllum peltatum),* even though they may look similar and have similar properties. I use it often as a substitute for European mandrake because I can grow May apple in my garden more easily. Though May apple root is sometimes listed medicinally, it too is potentially toxic and should not be taken without a doctor's or experienced herbalist's supervision. All the herbalists I know don't use either form of mandrake medically. Mandrake was known as an abortifacient, as well as a charm for love, sex, and flying, so pregnant women should be very careful even when using its energies, its spirit medicines, and should perhaps avoid it altogether during the term of pregnancy.

In the same vein, the name datura comes from the Sanskrit *dhattura.* Dhatturea, meaning datura poisoner, is a word applied to the Thug sect. This cult of assassins holds the Hindu goddess Kali, the dark mother of destruction, as their sacred patron. Many modern witches have adopted Kali as a patron goddess. It's another link of datura to the witch and the Goddess. The traditions reported on by Carlos Castaneda use datura, among other plants. He called datura "devil's weed," though the Zuni and Navaho call it sacred datura. Both usually refer to the species *Datura inoxia,* though *Datura stramonium* is also used in shamanic rites. All plants of the *Datura* genus have a very witchy, dark goddess quality to them. Most Western male recreational users of it report negative experiences with it, though shamans and witches, those with a healthy respect for the goddess energy, have transforming experiences. Some call it angel's trumpet, granting messages from the gods. Other folk names for datura include thorn apple, devil's apple, mad apple, jimson weed, stinkweed, and witch's thimbles.

Fly agaric, or the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom, colored red with white dots, is the preferred plant ally of Eurasian shamans. *Amanita muscaria* looks quite close to *Amanita panthera,* a very toxic mushroom common in North America, though there is enough conflicting data on the *Amanita muscaria* that many consider it a poison as well. The *muscaria* mushroom could be the source of red and white-capped fairies and gnomes found in the European traditions.

Such visions are most likely manifestations of the plant spirit to the intoxicated practitioner. Modern practitioners have experienced shapeshifting “space elves” that are sometimes faerylike, and other times reminiscent of sci-fi gray aliens, as a part of a modern mythology. The mushrooms growing on the tree are like the steps or stairs on the great World Tree in the climb to the other worlds. For shamanic use of mushrooms in North America, the *psilocybin* mushroom is more common.

Southwestern traditions use the popular peyote cactus, while those in Peru use the San Pedro cactus, both empowered by the chemical mescaline. In the Amazon, the sacramental intoxicant is known as Ayahuasca. Not a single plant, but a mixture of two different species, Ayahuasca is a powerful psychedelic. The formulas differ from shaman to shaman, but they all contain a mixture of similar plant chemicals. Alone, these plants are not typically psychoactive. It is through the mixing of plant allies that a powerful chemical and spiritual synergy occurs. Forms of “tree” datura, from the *Brugmansia* genus, are used in certain Ayahuasca brews.

A variety of other trance-inducing plants, including morning glory seeds and Syrian rue, are used across the globe. Some are measurably psychoactive according to modern science’s understanding of such chemicals, while others seem to induce trance through their inner spiritual qualities.

This path of power, “opening the gates” with power plants, is both rewarding and dangerous, particularly when working with the more poisonous European plant allies. In Carlos Castaneda’s work *The Teachings of Don Juan,* his teacher, Don Juan, states the following when referring to datura rituals: “To tame the devil’s weed into an ally is one of the most difficult tasks I know” (p. 49). I think the same can be said of all the psychedelic plant allies. The detailed training, preparation, and responsible use of such substances goes beyond the scope of this book.

Random experiments with power plants can end in sickness and death, so I don’t recommend you experiment with them without a strong background in medicinal herbalism or the assistance of an experienced teacher. It only takes a small mistake to end your life. The legality of some of these substances is suspect in much of the Western world because they can be dangerous, and as Wicca claims its place as a respected world religion, we can honor the past and our history but find appropriate tools for the world in which we live.

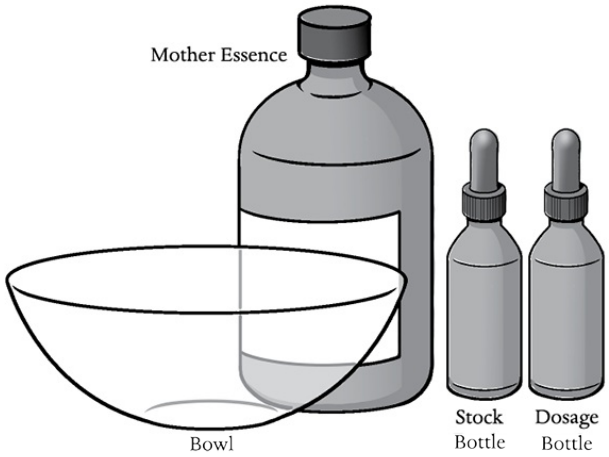


Figure 34: *Flower Essence Creation*

Safe Ways to Work with Powerful Plant Spirits

There are many safe ways to work with powerful and poisonous plants. You can potentially ally with the spirit of the plant and not necessarily ingest or apply it to have the same effect, as my yarrow ally demonstrated to me. Use of these techniques with any plant, poisonous or benign, will deepen your understanding of your green allies.

Cultivation

Grow the plants in your garden. By cultivating the plants and simply being around them energetically, you can tap in to their spirit without danger of poisoning. Such cultivation, particularly of datura and aconite, is a part of shamanic witchcraft training. Make sure these plants are guarded from small children who might take them orally. A gated witch's garden is ideal.

Charm

Carry the dried herb with you in a pouch, like a fetish. You can feel its power working on your energy body, helping you journey and do magick, but you are protected from all the potential harms of ingesting the plant. Make sure to wash your hands thoroughly after working with toxic herbs, to be absolutely certain of your safety.

Flower Essences

Flower essences are dilute solutions of flowers soaked in water. They have

very little chemical content, if any. Primarily they are energetic and vibrational. Flower essences of poisonous plants are made without actually soaking the flowers in the water, but by connecting the energy to the watery infusion.

To make a flower essence, sit and meditate with the flowering plant. Ask permission of the plant spirit, and when you feel you have it, follow your guidance when preparing the essence. Traditionally a few flowers are picked and floated on spring or distilled water in a clear, clean glass bowl with no markings. Clinical essence makers will say to use sterilized scissors and tongs to cut and pick the flowers, to keep your energy out of it, but to the shamanic witch, our energy, our relationship to the plant, is integral to the process, so use your hands! For poisonous flowers, just put the bowl of water next to or under the plant. Even soaking a few flowers in water can be fine. I, and many other flower essence users, have consumed flower essences of poisonous plants like monkshood with no ill effects because the solution is so dilute.

Leave the water in the sunlight, near the plant, to solarize. Three hours is usually sufficient, but you can let your intuition tell you when it is done. You can also use moonlight, either alone or in conjunction with the sun. Each process brings out different qualities of the plant medicine. Moonlight essences are more astral, emotional, inward, and spiritual. My most powerful essences were made during the daylight hours of the full moon, left in the sun all day and under the moon all night, and retrieved and bottled before dawn.

This essence water, like a solar tea, is appropriate to use as is, for ritual work and meditation, or you can bottle and preserve it for future use. If you go that route, use dark glass bottles and store them in a cool, dark place. Exposure to sunlight will ruin the essence.

Fill the main storage bottle 1⁄3 full of a preservative, such as 80 proof or higher alcohol, cider vinegar, or glycerin. I prefer vodka or brandy due to their long-term preservative properties, but if you have alcohol sensitivity, you can use either of the other preservatives. Pour the bowl water into the bottle, straining out the flowers. This is now your mother essence. Though you can take a few drops of the mother essence ritually or add it to your ritual chalice water, most clinical essence practitioners take a few drops of the mother essence and put it into a solution of 1⁄3 preservative and 2⁄3 water in a smaller dropper bottle, creating what is known as a stock bottle. This is the solution you buy at health food stores. Dilution makes the energy more potent. Then

you can dilute a few drops of your stock solution into a bottle with the same proportions of 1⁄3 preservative and 2⁄3 water, now called a dosage bottle, and take your essence directly from it. The solution in the dosage bottle has the strongest spiritual, emotional, and mental effects on the user.

Herbal Essences

Herbal essences are another way to work with plant spirit medicine. An herbal essence, as opposed to a flower essence or flower remedy, is a vibrational remedy of a medicinal tincture. If you have a tincture of the herb (see next paragraph), place one to five drops in a large glass of water or ritual chalice. Meditate with it and then drink it. This ritual imbues the water with the plant's vibration, without a large amount of chemical content. It can be very effective when working with plants on a shamanic level. If you wish to meet the spirit of a plant—say, for example, lemon balm—make a lemon balm herbal essence from a lemon balm tincture, drink it in ritual, and then perform your journey. Through the Principle of Correspondence you will have your link to the spirit of lemon balm. By putting just a drop of tincture from a potentially toxic plant in your ritual water, you are taking a homeopathic dose of the plant, but without any risk of harm. For toxic plants, I use just one drop in a large amount of water.

To make a tincture, start with a canning jar. If you are using fresh herb, fill the jar with the herb. If using dry herb, fill it 1⁄3 full. Fill the jar with alcohol as the menstruum (solvent). Again, I prefer 80 proof or higher and usually use vodka or brandy. Other menstruums include vinegar or glycerin, but vodka gives you an almost indefinite shelf life. If the cap is metal on the inside, use plastic wrap between the liquid and the cover. Opinions vary as to how long to keep the herb in the alcohol. I was taught that six weeks guarantees a full extraction. I keep the jar near my altar and shake it every day, asking for the blessing of the plant spirit in this mixture. Then strain the herb out and store the tincture in a dark bottle.

Flying Ointment

Here is a recipe for flying ointment that I have used in my own practice. It can be very strong. I tested it out on a shamanic Wheel of the Year celebration. People who resonated with its energy had amazing journeys. Others ended up with fragmented journeys and headaches. The formula can be complicated, but

safer than traditional poisonous ointments. I've experimented with different proportions and mediums, but these are the herbs and ingredients that I've used consistently.

Modern Flying Ointment

1.5 ounces mugwort infused oil *(Contact with mugwort may cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating.)*

1.5 ounces lemon balm infused oil

1 ounce, by weight, of beeswax

3 drops mugwort tincture *(Contact with mugwort may cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating.)*

3 drops cinquefoil tincture

3 drops vervain tincture

2 drops elder flower or elderberry tincture *(Elder bark, root, leaves, and unripe berries are toxic. The flowers and ripe berries are okay.)*

1 drop mandrake tincture *(Label as poisonous!)*

1 acorn, if possible, or the twig or seed of the tree you consider to be the World Tree

Essential oils to scent

Start with an infused oil base. To make an infused oil, you have two options—sun infusion or double boiler infusion. I prefer the sun method. Get a dry canning jar, since any moisture will cause mold. Fill the jar with fresh herb, if available. Make sure the herb is dry. Collect it during the middle of the day, on a warm, sunny day. Or you can dry it on a screen for twelve to twenty-four hours. If fresh herb is not available, fill the jar 1⁄3 full of dried herb. Fill the rest of the jar with extra virgin olive oil. Make sure there is no space or bubbles in the jar. Then seal it and leave it in the sun, in a garden preferably, for thirty days. If the cap is metal, put some plastic wrap between the cap and oil before you seal the jar. The oil will seep out of the top and down the sides of the jar, due to a vacuum effect, and that's fine. Then strain the herb out of the oil, and store the oil in a labeled and dated jar. Put in one dropper full of vitamin E oil for every quart of olive oil you use. This will help preserve it for roughly four years.

If you don't have the time to make naturally infused oils, you can use the

same amount of herb to oil, but heat it in a crock pot on a low heat for one to three hours. If you don't have a crock pot, try making a double boiler by floating a Pyrex measuring cup of olive oil in a saucepan filled with water. These processes will infuse the medicinal and magickal properties of the herb into the oil. You can use these infused oils alone, ritually, or as the base for ointments.

To make the ointment, heat the oil to be used in the ointment in the aforementioned double boiler until it's too warm to put your finger in comfortably. Shave the beeswax with a grater, or cut it into small pieces, and put it into the oil, letting it melt. Add the tinctures to the hot oil and wax mixture. Stir. The doses of tincture seem like token amounts, but they have a magickal potency. Much like homeopathy and flower essences, sometimes less is more, at least energetically.

If you don't resonate with the tinctures I've suggested, try using your own flying herbs for this mix. You can also try using flower essences instead of tinctures. If you are making infused oils specifically for this ointment, you can add them to the infusion oil jar or double boiler/crock pot process. Try using a few drops of gem waters as well (see the next section on stone spirit medicine). Be creative. I've experimented with all these techniques and had great results. Each recipe works, but works slightly differently.

At this point, I also put the acorn in, to connect to my World Tree, but I usually take it out before I pour the mixture into an ointment jar. If you can't get an acorn, you can use a cleansed and charged crystal point. You can also use the seed, bark, or leaf of any kind of tree you associate with the World Tree.

Add the essential oils according to your preference. I usually use twelve drops of lavender because it is easily available, but if you have mugwort essential oil available, that would be ideal. Mugwort essential oil is powerful and potentially toxic, so only use one to three drops at the most. You could also use rosemary, lemon, orris root, or sandalwood, alone or in various combinations according to your scent preference. Remember, essential oils are strong, so start with a small amount.

Cover the ointment jar to prevent the essential oil from evaporating from the hot liquid. Let it cool, and then tighten it. To use the ointment, anoint your temples, wrists, third eye, or other chakra points before a journey or ritual. You might want to experiment with this ointment before you use it for an

important ritual so you know how it works for you.

Incense

If you prefer the smoke of incense to tinctures, oils, and creams, you can use the following recipe.

Journeying Incense

1 part sandalwood
1 part orris root
1 part frankincense
1 part benzoin
1 part star anise
½ part mugwort *(Contact with mugwort may cause dermatitis.)*
½ part broom flowers
¼ part yarrow flowers
¼ part rue *(Contact with rue may cause dermatitis. The seeds are toxic. Pregnant women should avoid contact with rue.)*

Store the ingredients in a tight glass jar for at least one moon cycle, and then burn on charcoal disks in a censer. This recipe is not always pleasant-smelling compared to commercial brands of incense, but it can really aid the journey. I once added a dried datura leaf to the mix, and it smelled worse, but seemed to have a powerful energy to it. Broom flowers are not always commercially available, so unless you know to harvest them when they are in bloom, you might be out of luck. If so, feel free to substitute another herb.

Plants for Flying Ointments and Incenses

The following is a list of plants that can be used in flying ointments and incenses, along with toxicity warnings. Experiment with your own safer flying ointments, using minute doses or safe alternatives.

Aconite *(Poisonous.)*
Anise
Apple
Benzoin
Broom
Catnip
Cinquefoil

Cloves
Damiana
Dogwood
Elder *(Elder bark, root, leaves, and unripe berries are toxic. The flowers and ripe berries are okay.)*
Foxglove *(Careful—ask physician before using.)*
Frankincense
Hemp *(Illegal in many places.)*
Lemon balm
Mandrake *(Poisonous.)*
Morning glory seeds *(Potentially toxic.)*
Mugwort *(Contact with mugwort can cause dermatitis.)*
Myrrh
Nightshade *(Poisonous.)*
Orris root
Parsley
Poplar
Rue *(Contact with rue can cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating.)*
Saffron
Sandalwood
Solomon's seal
Star anise
Toadflax
Tobacco *(Potential health hazard if inhaled regularly.)*
Vervain
Vinca *(Potentially poisonous. Do not use if pregnant.)*
Wild celery *(Potentially poisonous.)*
Yarrow *(Contact with yarrow can cause dermatitis. Do not use if pregnant or lactating.)*

Herbalists and scientists often disagree on the toxicity warnings of many plants. If in doubt, err on the side of caution. Consult a qualified professional before using any herb topically or internally, particularly if you have any prior medical conditions, are on medication, or are pregnant or nursing.

Stone Spirit Medicine

In the same way animals and plants carry a vibration, stones, minerals, and crystals carry a healing vibration, a medicine that can correct imbalances. Based on color and structure, this is the fundamental principle guiding all forms of crystal healing. Though many assume it to be a New Age phenomenon, the use of minerals for spiritual and physical healing is actually a very old practice from both the ancient cultures of Egypt and Greece as well as shamanic cultures.

The power of stones was well-known in magickal times. They became talismans of magick and meditation, as well as helpers in healing. Simply carrying a stone can make a difference in your energetic balance, but having a living relationship with the mineral can bring out many powerful qualities. Shamanic stone healers focus on a small number of stones to be their allies. Each holds the healing power and magick of a powerful spirit.

Certain stones are under the dominion of a particular goddess or god. Lapis, for example, is sacred to Inanna, Queen of Heaven. Amber, technically a fossilized resin and not a stone, is sacred to Freya, the Norse goddess of fertility and magick. The magick of the stone resonates with a deity, planet, or astrological sign, giving rise to the popular lore of birthstones and mineral spellcraft.

Stone magicians bring out the natural power of the stones, their magick and medicine. Just as plant spirit healers don't necessarily need to ingest the actual physical plant to receive its benefits if they have a relationship with it, a shamanic practitioner can retrieve stone spirit medicine from allies in the other worlds, and transfer it to themselves or another through a healing ritual with or without the stone's physical presence.

The following is a list of potential stone allies for the shamanic witch.

Amethyst

Amethyst brings the medicine of peace and clarity. Used for those with addictions or escapist issues, amethyst means "not drunk" and can bring sobriety and centeredness.

Bloodstone

Flecked with red specks on a green background, bloodstone energizes the self

and purifies the blood. Its medicine brings strength and courage.

Carnelian

Carnelian has many healing benefits. It brings out our intuitive and creative abilities, and grants a greater ability to express them.

Citrine

Citrine is a shower of golden light used for healing, prosperity, and insight. Abundance and blessings, linked with the solar sphere and the Upper World, are its gifts.

Emerald

The power of these prized green stones opens the heart, brings prosperity, and physically and spiritually aids the eyes in seeing the truth.

Fluorite

The structure of fluorite promotes order, cleansing the energy bodies of unwanted forces and strengthening the auric boundary for protection and to create a sense of personal space.

Garnet

Garnet is a fire stone that is both energizing and grounding. It helps you manifest your passions in material form.

Jasper

This stone's medicine grants strength for the long haul and determination to complete projects. It connects to the earthy wisdom of the planet and aids in retrieving past-life memories.

Kyanite

Kyanite removes blocks from the throat chakra and mental body, granting you access to the powers of truth, communication, and creativity.

Lapis Lazuli

Sacred to the goddess Inanna, the blue lapis stone embodies the medicine of richness, prosperity, and luxury, as well as spiritual riches, creativity, and magick. Some use lapis as a stone of protection, while others use it for communication. Lapis lazuli is also used to alleviate depression.

Malachite

Malachite is a stone of protection and grounding on its most basic level. When used as a spirit medicine, malachite not only aids in grounding, but also helps us fulfill our life's purpose in the physical world. Known as a stone of prosperity in magick, the spirit medicine helps us succeed and be prosperous while fulfilling our purpose.

Moonstone

Moonstone medicine is the power of the moon goddess, aligning one with the moon cycles, psychic ability, intuition, the dream world, and emotional balance.

Obsidian

The black mirror, obsidian is a powerful stone of protection, introspection, and manifestation. It is said to grant wishes and is held sacred by the Underworld deities. Obsidian reflects the shadow self.

Onyx

The medicine of onyx is traditionally used to deal with grief and suffering. It helps one assimilate new roles and responsibilities for the highest good. Onyx helps us integrate our karmic lessons.

Opal

Opal contains all colors, and is used to increase the flow of dazzling white light and open the crown chakra. It brings the subtle bodies into balance, aiding meditation and shamanic journey.

Quartz

Quartz is the stone of the shaman. Quartz medicine and magick can be used for literally anything, since quartz amplifies all intentions. When given as a spirit medicine, it amplifies and revitalizes personal energy, purging all that doesn't serve our highest good.

Rose Quartz

Rose quartz is the stone of unconditional love, gentleness, and creativity. It is soft, soothing, and healing to the emotional and mental bodies. Self-love and acceptance are encouraged with the stone medicine of rose quartz.

Ruby

Fire is the element embodied by ruby. Ruby spirit medicine grants power and

protection, and helps with issues of sexuality, anger, and the appropriate use of power. Ruby bolsters the root chakra and immune system, and stimulates blood flow.

Tourmaline

Tourmaline comes in many colors, and the colors will influence the medicine energy it carries, based on chakra or elemental associations. Traditionally, black is protecting and purging. Green/pink/watermelon are for healing the heart. Blue is for communication and abundance.

Turquoise

Turquoise is another powerful shamanic stone with many uses. It can be used for all medicine and magick, and is known as a stone of healing, peace, protection, tranquility, and communication.

Ideally it would be great to obtain a small sample of the stones you ally with to truly feel their medicine, to use in meditation, or to place in your witch bag. Though the tendency to run out and gather large numbers of crystals is strong in many witches, myself included, I suggest that you start with a small number of stones, and build a deep relationship with them. Think of your relationships with your stone spirit allies, and all allies, as potentially deep friendships, not short acquaintanceships. The stone people work slowly but deeply. Learn patience to work with them.

You don't even need to seek out exotic stones from faroff locations. White beach or river stones are most likely quartz, depending on where you are. Such naturally polished stones are excellent for healing work. You would be surprised at the number of powerful stones hiding in your own backyard, park, or beach, waiting to build a relationship with you.

Exercise 28

Stone Spirit Medicine Retrieval Journey

Just as you journeyed for animal and plant medicine, do another journey to find a stone spirit ally. Stone medicine works much the same way as the others, so follow the traditional format of creating sacred space, asking for "the stone spirit that is correct and good at this time," and then continuing your journey. Stone spirit medicine can be gathered for others, and transferred like animal

and plant medicine through breath and ritual.

Gem Elixirs

One powerful way of working with stone medicine is through gem elixirs. Like flower essences, gem elixirs, also known as gem essences, are vibrational remedies. Though they, too, are often seen as modern New Age contrivances backed only by “channeled” information, the use of similar vibrational remedies can be found in shamanic traditions. Australian aboriginal practitioners have a ritual of initiation where quartz crystals are soaked in rainwater, and then the initiate consumes the water to infuse himself with the crystal energy.

Eastern shamans believe that each tektite (an extraterrestrial stone formed from a meteor strike) brings a new spirit ally to earth. If a shaman wishes to bond with a spirit from such a stone, the stone is soaked in water, and then the water is drunk to connect the shaman with the spirit journeying with the stone.

Modern witches and crystal healers follow a similar practice. A stone is ritually cleansed, consecrated (*OTOW,* chapter 13), and placed in a glass of water in sunlight for physical effects, or in moonlight to bring out the psychic/spiritual qualities. After a few hours, the water is drunk to infuse the qualities of the stone in your body. This has a deeper and more immediate and intimate effect than simply carrying the stone with you. The process evokes the spiritual healing properties of the stone in an intense way.

Before you use this technique, make sure your mineral is neither water-soluble, like selenite, nor potentially poisonous when soaked in water, like unpolished malachite. Research your stone thoroughly. When in doubt, the quartz family of silicon dioxide crystals—clear quartz, white quartz, rose quartz, smoky quartz, amethyst, citrine, agate, aventurine—is always safe and nonsoluble.

Such stone elixirs can be used in ritual, as the water in the chalice, for bathing and cleansing, to consecrate ritual tools, to heal the land from environmental damage, and to create sacred space. Waters can be placed in an atomizer bottle,and used to fill the room with a particular energy. They can be mixed and mingled with flower essences, herbal tinctures, floral waters, and essential oils.

Commercial preparations of gem elixirs, flower essences, and other

vibrational remedies use alcohol, cider vinegar, or glycerin to preserve the original water. If you wish to preserve your gem water as a gem elixir, use the same process as you would a flower essence, generating a mother essence and diluting it to stock and dosage levels. Ritualistically I prefer to make fresh elixirs and essences when possible. They help build an immediate relationship to the stone spirit medicine.

Remember that having the stone physically present is not absolutely necessary when you have a shamanic relationship with the stone. You can evoke the power of a stone into the water if you cannot afford to purchase the mineral.

Spirit Song and Art Medicine

Sound is a powerful form of spirit medicine. Our medicine allies, from animals to plants, stones to stars, are said to carry their own song. Their song is their vibration, their energy. Each ally holds a specific song, and even a dance, to create healing. Shamans tap in to the power of song and dance in their rituals. All our magickal uses of sound ultimately come from the mystics' shamanic relationships with the other worlds and their inhabitants. Certain scholars suggest that the word shaman is related to the Sanskrit word *saman,* meaning "song." Many shamans heal through song and chant.

The power of sound is an incredible way to magickally transform consciousness and build bridges to the spirit world. It has been harnessed formally in mantra, chant, and sacred song. The sounds heard in deep altered states of consciousness become the seed sounds for the traditions of sacred song and chant. Sound is used when working with spirits. Old medieval manuscripts have the names of angels, demons, and spirits to be summoned by magicians. The name carries the vibration—the shape, pattern, and energy —of the spirit. By intoning it properly, you summon the spirit. The power of vibration is inherent in the makeup of the universe, physical and nonphysical (see the Principle of Vibration, *ITOW,* chapter 8). Sound is the easiest way humans can tap directly into the power of vibration and know its effects.

Music, along with art, dance, poetry, and story, are magickal evocations originating from the shamanic traditions. The first stories and myths were the tales of the otherworld, told by the shaman after a journey. The first poems

and songs were told to the shamans by the spirits. The shamans then learned to use words, songs, and poems in ritual to call the spirits. Our first dances were ritual dances, mimicking animal shapes used in ceremonies to connect with the power of our animal allies. The first art was the ritual cave paintings and mandalas used to connect with and commemorate the spirits. From these first yearnings grew our modern arts, just as our medicines and sciences grew from our magickal traditions.

Our magickal words, found in many magickal traditions, grew out of the shaman's journey. The use of words is still tied strongly to the way we describe magick today. We use the term spell for a magickal intention, but spell also refers to the arrangement of letters within a word. To cast a spell, we must arrange letters and words to convey our meaning to the universe. Some witches turn their spellcraft into verse, chant, and song.

Shamanic witches use sacred sound in a variety of ways, from traditional songs and chants to self-created melodies and words. In truth, the inspiration comes directly from our spirit allies, for each of them holds their own spirit song. The vibrations of sacred song align our three selves. Our songs call the spirits and let them know we are willingly working with them. The vibrational power of sound carries our intentions through the cosmos. Sacred sound is a way to work deeply with our spirit allies and the creative spirit. Why else would the use of sacred sound be found almost universally across so many different regions, traditions, and belief systems?

Power Words and Songs

Shamans receive in their journeys particular words or songs of power that resonate with their own personal power and vibration. Chanting these words or songs focuses the shaman's attention, releases her power, and can create incredible change. The words are sometimes nonsensical. My own primary power words sound Middle Eastern in flavor, though they correspond to no common magickal phrases I have encountered, and I don't consciously have a strong connection to the Middle East. If I had chosen my power words through my ego, they would have been Gaelic, Sanskrit, or Latin, but what my highest guidance gave me was something different, and is very effective. When you feel guided, do a journey to receive your power words/songs. You may get them directly in a journey, receive them in a dream, or be spontaneously

inspired during a ritual or healing.

Medicine Songs

Medicine songs are the songs of your medicine allies. Singing their songs, which can be anything from a strange tone to a full melody, with or without words, evokes their power in the Middle World when you do not have the time or space to do a full journey and contact these medicine allies in the other worlds. Rituals can involve their medicine songs to bring their power to us without the deeper trance inducement. Such evocations require a strong connection to the medicine spirit. The ally is said to literally put its song in your heart, and you become a sacred keeper of the song. I always worry about remembering the song, and have tried unsuccessfully to concoct a special musical script to notate it. But I have found that I don't need a system of notation. I don't remember all the songs and tones consciously, but when they are needed, they rise from my heart. They may be variations from the versions I first heard, but their spirit and effect are just as powerful.

Medicine Dance and Art

Dance and art also have vibrational qualities to them, though they do not involve sound. Just as you can be gifted with a medicine song from an ally, you can also receive a sacred dance or pictogram to be used in ritual. Medicine dances aid in shapeshifting exercises by imparting the animal's spirit medicine upon you when you dance. The animal-mask dances of pagan and tribal people originate from medicine dances. The symbols, movements, and songs became the core seeds of later formal rituals. They carry power in many different forms, but if you receive the song, dance, or art as a gift from an ally, your personal connection to the energy will make its effect all the more powerful and healing for you.

Power Languages

Our sacred languages and words of power come from our inner journeys. They are used to create both a change in consciousness and a change in the physical world. In Norse shamanism, the names of the runes are toned and chanted with great power. Each is a gateway to a living force. The ogham names can be used in a similar manner, evoking the spirit essence of the tree. You can find power words in other traditions as well. If attuned to Reiki, the

Reiki symbol names evoke healing powers. Seed syllables found in Sanskrit chants convey magickal changes, as do Hebrew words and letters. I've drawn from chants learned in yoga class as part of my healing rituals, when the sounds and intention intuitively felt appropriate.

Spell Chants

Much like creating a magickal sigil (*OTOW,* chapter 13), you can use the same principles to create your own symbolic chants for a specific intent. Simply write down an intentional phrase, like a spell, of what you want to create. Make it as simple as possible. Then cross out the repeated letters. You can play with the technique to make it aesthetically pleasing by keeping in certain letters, but basically you want to convert the intention into a symbolic sound, something that is no longer a true language. By using this symbolic sound in ritual, you can raise energy to manifest your desire. For example, your first intention for healing, while working with the goddess Cerridwen, could be this:

HEAL ME NOW CERRIDWEN

Cross out the repeated letters:

~~H~~EAL M~~E~~ NO~~W~~ C~~ERR~~ID~~WE~~N

H–AL M– NO– C——ID—N

And you get this:

HALM NOC IDN

You would then chant "Halm Noc Idn" as your energy-raising spell.

A more common spell intention for prosperity could be expressed like this:

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Cross out the repeated letters:

~~FINAN~~C~~IA~~L ~~FREE~~DOM

———C–AL –R—DOM

And you get this:

CAL R'DOM

You could use "Cal R'Dom," or being creative you could take out the *R,* if it's too cumbersome, and simply use "Cal Dom" as your chant.

Sonic Brews

Speak your intentions, power words, songs, or any other form of magickal verse into your daily liquids. Speak your intentions three times over your water, tea, coffee, or anything else, and then drink it in, drinking in the intentions and becoming them. This technique can be used in conjunction with flower essences and gem elixirs.

These are just a few of the ways you can use sacred sound in a magickal or shamanic context. They are not the only ways. Explore your own unique use of sacred sound, song, and chant in your practice.

Exercise 29

Sacred Sound

Explore one or more of the aspects of sacred sound presented in this chapter. Try to regularly incorporate sacred sound into your shamanic rituals, journeys, and healing work.

Additional Medicines

Animals, plants, and stones are the most common spirit medicines, but not the only ones. In essence, if everything is alive with consciousness and vibration, then everything has a medicine, a lesson of wisdom to share. Other potential medicines include star medicine, planet medicine, elemental medicine, weather medicine, and even the medicine of specific locations on earth. Follow your intuition about what will bring healing and balance to a situation.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 26–29 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

Continuing Assignments

- Continue with your dream work and traditional journaling.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.
- Be mindful of the energies and allies in your life. Continue to develop your spirit-ally relationships.

Recommended Reading and Resources

- *Psychedelic Shamanism* by Jim DeKorne.
- *Plant Spirit Medicine* by Eliot Cowan.
- *Flower Essence Repertory* by Patricia Kaminski and Richard Katz.
- *Healing with Flower and Gemstone Essences* by Diane Stein.
- *The Herbal Tarot* by Michael Tierra and Candis Cantin.
- *Sex, Drugs & Magick* by Robert Anton Wilson.

Tips

- Review the tips at the end of chapter 12 that also apply to plant, stone, and song spirit medicine, including "healing awareness," medicine retrievals for others, and relating your new allies to your directional spirit wheel mandala (Figure 4).
- Build a living relationship with plants. Find them in the wild, being careful to make an accurate identification. When you walk or hike, take a plant identification book with you. Cultivate them in a garden or windowsill. Seek them out in public gardens, parks, and shops. Many "herbal" witches only recognize herbs as dried powders in tiny bags in the racks of witch shops. They couldn't identify the same herbs growing wild in their front yard or street corner. I was one of those witches for a long time, I'm sorry to say. Then I took a greater interest in medicinal herbalism and later completed an apprenticeship course that forced me to go out and identify, cultivate, and harvest a variety of plants. The experience absolutely transformed my magickal and shamanic practices.
- Think about any plants you remember from your childhood. They may be herbal allies, waiting to reclaim a relationship with you. As a teen, I was given slippery elm bark tea to soothe a sore throat. Though I hated it at the time, the elm has become my ally. I also vividly remember playing in fields of red clover and picking lily of the valley, foxglove, and lilac, which have also become herbal allies for me.
- If you started a *materia magicka* from your *Outer Temple of Witchcraft* training (*OTOW,* chapter 13), add your knowledge of plant and stone spirit medicine to the traditional spell lore.

• Never consume a plant just because a plant ally spirit tells you to do so, even if it says it's safe to do so. Always refer to a reputable herbal medicine book to see if the plant is poisonous. Poisonous plants can have trickster spirits. Though they have good information, it is in their nature to poison.

• Don't feel self-conscious about using sacred sound. Make your voice known. Play with sacred sound, and develop your own voice. All voices are sacred, no matter how non-sonorous or musical you think you are.

• If you have the opportunity, either make or obtain some black-eyed Susan flower essence, blackberry flower essence, or obsidian gem elixir. Using these essences during the last few lessons when you are learning to face the shadow will help you contact your shadow self in a safe and effective manner.

[contents]

14

Lesson Ten
Past-Life Healing

So much of our spirit work goes hand in hand with honoring the ancestors. Even if you don't directly work with the ancestral realm as your primary allies, your ancestors, genetic and spiritual, are your roots, your foundation for your present and future work.

When we think of the pagan and shamanic reverence for the land, missing in so many modern spiritualities, ancestor reverence is even more illuminated. As we inter bodies and ashes back into the land, our ancestors merge with the land, which is the visible "roof" of the Underworld, the ancestral home from which spring healing and power.

What we forget, however, is our identity in the chain of the ancestors. We were dead once, and were someone's ancestors. Now we are being reborn. We, too, have a soul history that is the foundation upon which we live in the present and build our future. Without an understanding of both our ancestors' and our soul's ancestry, we might never have the centeredness we seek.

Belief in Rebirth

Most modern pagans subscribe to the idea of past lives, reincarnation, karma, and rebirth, though it doesn't come from any "official" pagan doctrine. You don't have to believe in reincarnation to be a pagan. Many don't. But strong convictions are held by those who have had experience with past lives. If you experience the healing that can come from past-life work, you will be more inclined to be open to the possibility. I know I didn't initially believe in it, but I, and members of my family, have had strong experiences with it. Then, in my counseling work, past-life issues would spontaneously arise in session. When handled in the context of reincarnation, my clients would quickly resolve the issues, when otherwise they were stuck.

The modern pagan's belief in past lives is an amalgam of several different

Old World beliefs that have become commonplace in the neopagan and New Age worlds. Though many will cite the beliefs of the Druids, as reported by Caesar, as the foundation of reincarnation theory in European paganism (and there is much truth to that theory), much of our understanding comes from Eastern sources. Hindu and Buddhist material has made its way to the mystical traditions of the West. Through the push to bring the various forms of yoga and their underlying philosophies to the United States and Europe, concepts like rebirth and karma made their way into what would become a New World, personal spirituality movement. Concepts of global reincarnation moved out of the traditional caste system, and many people now believe they have a soul history across the globe.

Also responsible for this worldview in Western mysticism were the early seeds of Eastern mysticism planted in the West by the Eastern occult leanings of the Theosophical Society and one of its founders, Madame Blavatsky. The esoteric teachings of the Jewish Kabalah, considered the “yoga of the west,” were transformed into the Hermetic Qabalah by ceremonial magicians, fusing both Jewish and pagan thought on reincarnation in its teaching. Certain traditions of early Gnostic Christianity also had the concept of reincarnation. These little-known aspects of Judaism and Christianity, along with Theosophy and Hermetic Qabalah, have been incorporated into Western mysticism and the greater New Age movement.

The Druids, and perhaps other European mystics, most likely believed in a form of reincarnation, or rebirth, but probably believed that the process was guided by the ancestors, following tribes and bloodlines. The idea that a Celtic warrior who killed a Roman soldier would be reborn in the next life in a Roman family to resolve karma was not likely a common notion, but we’ll never know for sure since the Druids didn’t write much down. Their secret and esoteric teachings were taught orally, so there is a lot of speculation about what the Druids did and did not believe. There is some conjecture that since both the Celts and Hindus have a common ancestry in terms of their Indo-European roots, perhaps the Hindus simply codified and recorded teachings and understandings common to both.

Even though these traditions would not necessarily consider themselves shamanic, they have strong aspects of shamanism and contact with the other

worlds contained within their teachings. Shamanic traditions themselves vary in belief and style, and as many cultures were later influenced by Christian missionaries, it's difficult to discern their teachings on rebirth.

In Mongolian shamanism, as documented in the material found in the book *Chosen by the Spirits* by Sarangerel, we have some of the clearest concepts of rebirth. This system presents a clear concept to reconcile seemingly conflicting lore of reincarnation. Like many of the Underworld traditions, the Mongolian Underworld has a guardian who keeps the souls of the living out and the souls of the dead in. Certain areas are considered the domains of those who have caused turmoil in the Middle World, those who are working out their "karma," to borrow the Hindu term. Like the Norse shamans, different areas of the spirit world are designated for those who died with dishonor, those who died as heroes, and those who simply died. In Mongolian traditions, each of the three shamanic selves has a different function in the rebirth process. The Upper World self, or ami soul, returns via genetic lineage. The Lower World soul, or suns, globally reincarnates. The Middle World self, or suld, does neither and becomes one with the nature spirit realm.

This shamanic view puts many of my own questions to rest about the nature of rebirth and the conflicting information and experiences. Practitioners have strong beliefs about genetic memory and soul memory. In this shamanic triple-self model, we have a traditional teaching that accommodates both worldviews. As we enter the New Age, and our tribe becomes the world tribe, and our village becomes the global village, perhaps such distinctions will not matter. For now, the three-self, three-path model resonates strongly with me. In the end, belief and theory don't matter. How helpful and healing the experience is will determine if it's true for you.

Reasons for Past-Life Regression

Experiencing past-life memories is typically a part of training as a witch. I included an introduction to it, with a variety of ideas on its theory, in chapter 16 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft*. The purpose of the initial past-life recall is much like a personal initiation. It's like a test, a trial to overcome, to prove you have the ability both to relax into a deep-enough meditation and to focus your concentration on aspects of your past that are not always pleasant.

Once you have an experience with past memories, your worldview may change dramatically. Past-life regression is empowering. As witches, we believe in a tradition of personal growth and evolution. Experiencing our past selves and our connections to other lands and traditions is empowering. Like any good magickal training, regression work can break previously held beliefs and notions about life and spirit, assuming you were not raised in a mystical family.

Beyond the aspect of initiation, of opening your mind to new possibilities, past-life regression has many more practical applications. My focus for regression work is on healing, though you can use it to retrieve past-life knowledge and skills to a limited extent. Many people who are drawn to magick have had past lives with magick, witchcraft, and shamanism, and through regression work can reclaim powerful techniques and knowledge that serve them in this life. Many powerful forms of witchcraft that claim a traditional or hereditary lineage have no historical documentation and seem to be “made up” by the modern practitioners. Perhaps they are not hereditary lineages, but are drawn from past-life memories and genetic memories. In this sense, they are ancient even though they are not historically documented or from an unbroken lineage.

Such regressions are a powerful and personal way to adapt your rituals and spells, and find your own traditions, though they can make group workings more difficult if you don’t realize such changes are personal and are not necessarily meant for everyone. They have a degree of validity because they have been done before. Their patterns are etched in the astral terrain, yet because they are not known in traditional occultist worlds, they are like dry riverbeds. Once you reclaim them, your use of the techniques is like pouring fresh water down the riverbed to create a “new” river.

In healing work, past-life regressions take on many forms. I started applying the technique in my practice when clients had specific issues that appeared to have no root in this life. Fears, phobias, complexes, and pains that had no real explanation were rooted in past-life experiences. Sometimes the regression itself, and the awareness it provided, was an immediate cure for the situation. Other times the awareness would bring a greater understanding of the issue, giving a reason for the situation. Even though it wasn’t from this life, the client experienced a strong mental, emotional, or spiritual connection with the

presented lesson, and could work on it with this new awareness. With that reflection and understanding, improvement was made.

At first I wasn't sure if my clients were making things up in their minds or if they were really experiencing past lives, since some of my initial training said that only witches were "twice borns." I couldn't believe that all of these people were meant to be witches. They knew I was a witch, and most of them did not have a desire to be a witch. So I eventually came to the conclusion that all people have past-life memories, but more witches actively pursue recalling them, leading to the "twice born" label.

Even in more traditional healing issues that didn't seem to be rooted in past-life experiences, I facilitated healing with powerful results. People would know they were trapped in unhealthy patterns and would do a lot of work to understand and heal these patterns based on what they had experienced in this life. Using both traditional counseling services and spiritual techniques, improvement would be made, yet the patterns still held on some level. Regressions gave them the final push into a healing transformation.

Current-Life Issues

An important aspect of past-life healing is to be aware of and actively work on everything experienced in this life. Many people who want to avoid their current-life issues assume that they must be past-life problems and that they will be easily solved with a regression. Their current issues and decisions are like an elephant in the room that they refuse to see. I insist that current-life issues be examined first and, in many situations, that traditional therapy be coupled with metaphysical solutions.

Once the current-life issues are carefully examined and worked on, many people benefit from diving deep into their soul history and finding the root, the first experience that established this pattern of behavior. Once that root is found, and a greater understanding and acceptance come from it, healing can occur on a profound level. Past-life work is not a quick fix or placebo. It does involve work. Past-life work requires responsibility and awareness, but it has provided resolutions for my clients that no other modality has been able to provide.

Healing the Past

Through regression experiences, it is quite possible to heal your past. Those are very powerful words, but they often create misunderstandings. Mystics say you can change the past, but ultimately they mean you can change your interaction with energies from the past, becoming aware of them and no longer unconsciously reacting to them in an unhealthy way in your present life.

Certain healers perpetuate the idea that one can literally change the past. Though this concept is theoretically possible in the deepest magickal sense, it is not the healthiest way to pursue personal transformation.

Though it may seem impossible to change the past, magick does allow a practitioner to change the future. The further in the future you project, the easier it is to make a change, because there is more time and opportunity to align the right forces and circumstances to create the change you desire.

Theoretically we are only in the present. The present is the only thing that is real, and magick works through space and time. The sacred magick circle is a space beyond space and a time beyond time. The past really only exists in our records and memories. The fewer people who know and remember something, the less “real” it is. Facts in history are always distorted by the point of view of the person who recorded them.

Magicians speculate that you can change the past much like you change the future, through spellcraft and ritual. Though theoretically possible, some have unfortunately applied that thought to healing past trauma and abuse. Through these techniques, traumas from this life and others are re-created in their mind, with positive outcomes, through intention and visualization. They attempt to forget the trauma and visualize the ideal. An abusive parent becomes loving and supportive. A violent attack is successfully defended in their mind’s eye.

Though it is fine to think about what could have been or might have been, denial of your memories and experiences is not healthy. Visualizing positive changes only makes minor changes to the mental body, but does not erase the trauma in the emotional, spiritual, and physical realms. Those experiences happen for a reason. Even the most damaging experience can be healed, but the lesson and understanding of the experience cannot be forgotten for true healing to occur.

Healing the past occurs when our understanding of the experience changes.

Through exploring our past memories of this life and others, we can understand our patterns. It is an opportunity to understand our motivations and take responsibility for our actions.

Karma is the term we use for this mechanism of understanding. An adopted term from the Hindu traditions, Western practitioners typically have a moralistic view of karma. People think of karma as a reward-punishment system. If you do good, you will be rewarded with blessings in your life. If you do harm, you will receive harm. As a universal "law," karma is not moralistic. Karma is like gravity. Karma is like momentum. Karma is cause and effect. Karma is not moral. It's a mechanism for balance. Many have applied it to the Wiccan Rede. I am always struck by Aleister Crowley's renaming of the Justice tarot card as Adjustment. The universe makes adjustments to bring balance, not necessarily justice, though some assume that the two are the same. Many describe karma as a bank account of credit and debit. Ultimately, to be in balance, to be in harmony with the universe, you want to clear all karma, "good" and "bad." Karma is that mechanism of adjustment. You don't get what you deserve. You reap what you have sown. If you don't like the term karma, you don't have to use it. Just understand the process of balance and how it can lead to compassion.

When you understand that karma is a mechanism to bring balance, both to the universe and to yourself, you can get out of moral judgment of yourself and others. We can step out of a victim mentality when we look at the larger picture of our soul and realize that we have all been victims. We have all been persecutors. We have all been heroes. We have all been villains.

When we understand the patterns of our soul, we have a greater understanding of the issues at hand. We understand the context of our relationships and our traumas. We can have compassion, Perfect Love, both for ourselves and for all of creation. We can truly see things from a space beyond space and a time beyond time, yet be in the world.

Though past events cannot be changed, the energy of those past events that you carry with you can be changed. The actions and responsibility you take in the future can make a huge impact on your past. If I didn't have any practical experience with this, I wouldn't quite believe it myself.

In my teen years, before I had any knowledge of magick or witchcraft, I hit a low point. I had some strange experiences in my life, but no understanding of

the metaphysics involved. Though I don't think I was in literal danger of committing suicide, it was the point in my life when the thought of suicide was strongest in my mind. I remember sitting alone in my room and having what I thought was a hallucination, though I had taken no drugs or alcohol. I remember seeing an adult version of me, bathed in light, radiating light out to me. I felt surrounded by light, and then in a blink it disappeared, and I was alone in my room. Whenever something strange or significant happened, I wrote it down in my journal, not understanding it.

Many years later, after my initial training in the craft, I sat down to meditate, as I regularly do, and started by connecting with my guides and asking what I should do for a meditation. Sometimes they would lead me on a journey or through an exercise. This time my guide said we should do a healing. She led me through a tunnel of light, and I saw myself, in my old room, as a teen. She told me to send myself healing light and love. After a few minutes she took me out of the meditation.

I had a strange sense of déjà vu. I remembered my teen experience but thought I was making it up until I found it in my journal. I was shocked. My guides later explained to me that even though I can't change the past, or the events that triggered my depression, I can send energetic and spiritual support to my past self. They explained that I can do this to my past self in this life and in other lives. Having compassion for myself won't change the history, but it will change the energetic foundations I carry with me in the present. From that point on, I saw my teen years in a different way and had a healthier outlook on my perceived past traumas. I stopped blaming others in my past and simply accepted the lessons and blessings and what they have given me today.

As I delved into the shamanic aspects of witchcraft, working in the other worlds and with my shadow self, my guides continued to move me toward regression work, both with regression therapists and spontaneously in my own meditations. Through that work I discovered past lives where I was involved in mysticism. I began to understand my passion for magick. I brought back some personal rituals and ideas that I didn't find in the well-known published traditions of magick, which helped my practice and teachings expand. I also "saw" people in my past lives whom I recognized in this lifetime, and had a greater understanding of my current relationships based on those past

memories.

Since my first intense experiences with past-life healing, I have incorporated similar exercises into my witchcraft training. I found that they prepared me for deeper shadow healing and shamanic soul healing. Having a karmic understanding of the process helped me shed a lot of the psychic “weight” that I carried. Lead, the heaviest metal, is the sacred substance of Saturn, the planet associated with karma. Much like the old alchemists, all mystics seek to transform the heavy karmic lead into pure, light, illuminated spirit gold. Karma is nonjudgmental. It doesn’t care on what level you work things out. Things that manifest in the spiritual realms can be dealt with and more easily overcome than when they manifest in the physical world. Through working with students and clients on the path of shadow healing, on the path of the shamanic witch, I’ve noticed that those who have started the process of healing the past have a more transforming experience at the culmination of their first round of shadow work. By experiencing your past, understanding it, and having compassion for yourself, you will be better prepared for the lessons in the rest of this book.

Past-Life Contracts

Past-life contracts, also known as karmic contracts, is a term that has evolved out of our understanding of karma. Though many wince at the idea, envisioning some terribly cliché celestial law office where souls sign up for traumatic relationships, the concept does have some merit and, more importantly, practical application.

The concept of a contract is symbolic of an agreement taking place. Contracts that are usually for our highest good occur between our higher selves. Vows we take in the physical world are contracts of our middle selves. Even intuitive, unspoken agreements are made by our lower selves. We think such agreements are not really binding, but they can imprint themselves on us and be carried into future lives. Sometimes death and the river of forgetfulness found in so many Underworld mythologies is not enough to release us from these agreements. It doesn’t wipe the slate clean, just the conscious memory of it.

When the otherworldly higher selves make agreements between lives, they represent agreements to work out karma, partners to help us find balance.

Finding souls who will play the role of teacher, spouse, child, sibling, employer, etc., is critical to our development. These parts of ourselves have sacred agreements with each other, to manifest circumstances in our life that will bring balance, and with others, to manifest the necessary relationships for balance. These karmic contracts are actually quite helpful, creating a mutual support team while on our earthwalks. Although these relationships aren't always easy, they are not necessarily traumatic either. Teachers and students have contracts to meet and share information and experiences to create change.

The past-life middle-self agreements are more recognizable and are usually less appropriate in this current life. If you take vows or make promises in this life or any other, you can carry them into the next life. Such vows explain strange behaviors between people, or circumstances that individuals seem powerless to change.

When I see two people who have a dysfunctional relationship, particularly a romantic one, and they understand that the healthiest thing to do is to let go of each other, but they can't, perhaps they made a past-life marriage vow to each other. On an unconscious level, they are seeking to honor it, but that relationship is no longer appropriate in this life.

These lingering past-life agreements are particularly noticeable to a healer or shaman when someone has done a lot of healing work already but cannot find any prosperity, romance, or self-empowerment. Many people involved in witchcraft have most likely had many past lives involved in spirituality, including traditional mainstream spiritualities. Past-life vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to an institution can create these seemingly inescapable circumstances. At first I thought this all sounded silly. I would see people working diligently on creating the life they wanted, with little or no success. They always hit a wall. Then I was guided to have one of these people perform a ritual to revoke all past-life contracts, and suddenly the wall dissolved. The person still had to do the work to create the life he wanted, but the invisible wall blocking him disappeared. I tried the ritual with others, and had similar results with some people. Revoking past-life contracts is not a cure-all for life's problems, but it does seem to give momentum to many who do it.

Even if you don't feel you are bound by past-life contracts, try this ritual. It will release all that is inappropriate for you in this life. Personally I didn't notice any great changes, but just in case you are not conscious of a past life-

limitation, renounce whatever doesn't serve your highest good. In the classroom setting, I've known a few people who didn't consciously feel they had hindering past-life contracts, but after the ritual, they did experience a release and improvement.

Exercise 30

Ritual to Revoke Past-Life Contracts

Do this ritual on the waning moon, to release and remove past-life vows and contracts. Cast your magick circle, and create a sacred space. As part of your invocation, use this statement:

> *I call upon my higher and lower selves, all my guides, guardians, healers, and patrons. I call upon all spirits perfect for this work, for the highest good, harming none.*

Write down all of these revocation statements as you would a traditional spell, to be read aloud in the ritual:

> *I, [state your name], ask the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, and all spirits of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, to guard, guide, and witness my renunciation of all harmful past-life vows.*
>
> *I release myself from all past-life vows, for my highest good, harming none.*
>
> *I release myself from all past-life vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.*
>
> *I release myself from all past-life contracts, obligations, and duties—real and imagined—that no longer serve my highest good.*
>
> *I claim my own power and my own responsibility. I acknowledge my higher self, the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, as the source of my authority. So mote it be.*

Burn the spell paper in your cauldron, and feel all past vows being released completely and immediately. Feel as if all psychic shackles and lead weights are being removed.

Thank and release all spirits who are present, and release the sacred circle in the usual manner.

If you desire, change the revoking of past agreements to suit your own intuition and individual needs. I've had students add releases from past-life burdens,

illnesses, pain, and unhealthy relationships, even if a specific vow was not involved.

In one class, my friend Christian expressed concern about healing past lives, or renouncing past-life vows. He felt, rightly so, that each of our past experiences helps us arrive at where we are now, and was afraid that tampering with the past might have an adverse effect on his current life, which was pretty good. He used the lessons he had learned from past difficulties to motivate him in the present. I told him to imagine himself as a child, so fascinated with a candle flame that he sticks his hand in it and gets burned. I'm sure any child would then remember that fires burns and learn to admire it from a distance. The lesson is not diminished if you put ointment or a bandage on the burn. The lesson is not enhanced if the burn never heals. Healing the injury doesn't diminish the memory of the lesson.

Healing Regression

This healing regression takes the past-life-regression experience in exercise 34 from *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* to the next level. Instead of simply seeking out a past-life experience for that initiatory awakening, you will be seeking out a past life that is in need of healing. Your experience will not change your past history, but will change your energetic relationship with the past in your current life.

Using the gateway of memories found in your inner temple, you will first travel to the past life that is perfect for you at this time. You will then use the healing techniques you have gathered—healing light, protection shields, spirit medicine, and whatever your spirits and totems guide you to use. When you return, you will integrate this new healed past-life relationship into your current consciousness and feel a shift in your energy.

Exercise 31

Healing Past-Life Regression

1. Start Exercise 2: The Inner Temple. Go to your inner temple, and connect with the guides and spirits that are appropriate for this healing. Reaffirm your protection shield, and feel the protection and love of your guides.

2. Ask to find the gateway of memories. Ask for the past-life experience in need of healing that is correct for you. Once you are standing before the doorway, open it up. It will lead you through a long tunnel with many doors.

3. One door in particular will stand out to you, perhaps because of its color or a symbol. This door leads to the past life correct for you. Go to that door and open it up. See the staircase descending, and walk it, counting each of the twenty-two steps backward, from twenty-two to one.

4. Jump off the last step, and feel yourself jumping into your past life. Immediately look down at your feet. What are your impressions? What do you see? Are you wearing shoes? Scan the body upward and describe what you are wearing. Are you a man or a woman? Look up and around at your environment. What do you see? Do you recognize the time period or location? Access the memories of this person. Who are you? Where are you? What is the season? What is the year?

5. How do you feel in this life, physically and emotionally? Are you healthy? Are you happy? If you are uncomfortable or in any pain, you can step out of your body and observe the events like a movie on the screen of your mind. Try to remain focused on the life, yet detached. You are experiencing something in the past that can no longer hurt you. Witness and observe your feelings, but do not attach to any unwanted emotions or thoughts.

6. Is there anything in need of healing here for you? Ask your guides, healers, and higher self what to do to help heal this situation. They will guide you to the proper techniques, from simple compassion to healing light or spirit medicine. Perform what your guidance tells you to do.

7. When done, release your awareness and go back to the stairs leading to your inner temple. Walk up the stairs, counting from one to twenty-two as you go. Walk the hallway back to the center of your temple, and close the gate of memories. Listen for any messages your guides have, and ask any further questions.

8. Once done, return through the World Tree tunnel and stand before the World Tree. Step back through the screen of your mind's eye, and let the World Tree gently fade from view.

9 . Return yourself to normal consciousness, counting up, giving yourself

clearance and balance. Do any necessary grounding.

As you work with your past selves and past issues, remember that before this incarnation you were one of the ancestors that witches and shamans today revere for love and guidance. You have been there before and will be there again. You have access to wisdom and healing when you remember that you are part of the great spiraling cycle. Always remember that we are the ancestors reborn! Act responsibly to bring balance for those who will come after us.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 30–31 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.

Continuing Assignments

- Continue with your dream work and traditional journaling.
- Continue studying your chosen cultural mythology.

Tips

- Review the past-life material in *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft,* chapter 16.
- Don't be afraid to seek out healing facilitation if you haven't already. Working with a skilled regression therapist open to mystical experiences can be very helpful to the process. If you feel you need facilitation but it's not available to you at this time, save these lessons for a future time when you have the support you need. Of all the exercises, Exercise 31: Healing Past-Life Regression is an excellent one to do with a friend or partner studying the craft with you.
- Be gentle with yourself. Take things slowly. This chapter is purposely short because emotionally it can be very powerful for those challenged with past-life difficulties. Don't push yourself too far too fast. Don't try to heal all your past traumas immediately. Realize that such healing might be lifelong, and will not be complete in the space of a month's lesson. This simply opens the door to greater levels of healing, though it may make you aware of wounds that you were not conscious of before these experiences.

• Your regression work might take you to a past event in this life, not just in a past life. Remember, it is in the past and it cannot harm you. If you fear you have unresolved past trauma from this life, it is even more important to seek out healing facilitation and traditional therapy.

• Don't get so embroiled in past-life events that you forget your current life. You are in this life primarily to deal with this life. Don't be trapped in the past. Be aware, but live in the present.

• Remember that you can't hold people in your current life responsible for events that occurred in past lives together. The knowledge you gain is for understanding, not blame. Though you might be angry at people who hurt you in a past life, they are not responsible for their past-life actions in the same way they would be if those actions were taken in this life. It's not personal. Energetically and karmically they are responsible, but not personally. They are different people now, as are you. Be angry if you must, but then move on. Use the knowledge to empower yourself, to understand and have compassion. You would not want someone else to hold you personally responsible in this life for all of your past-life mistakes.

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Lesson Eleven
Shamanic Healing

Before you embark on your journey into the shadow, the arts of deep healing must be a part of your personal toolbox. Such understanding will help you as you experience your own levels of healing. Knowing the map doesn't always help you when you experience difficulties with the terrain, but knowledge of potentially difficult paths can give a small measure of comfort to the traveler.

Many people, witches included, have no idea what to expect when healing the shadow. Intense psychic and spiritual experiences can make you feel as if you have gone insane. Such seeming madness goes hand in hand with the initiation of the shaman, and continuing the process brings you to the light at the end of the tunnel. But first you must know that there is light waiting for you.

The majority of the techniques detailed in this lesson are not for you to experience right now. They are a part of your education, to become familiar with, and to be armed with the knowledge should you need it on your healing journey, or if you later choose to work with others. Many of the situations described are complex, powerful, and traumatic, not the events of everyday life. Realize that like much of this book, such lists and labels of illness and healing techniques are to aid the modern Western student. Those studying with a traditional shaman would be taught firsthand as various situations arise, and specific terms and descriptions from that culture or tradition would be used. Here are the healing techniques distilled into core ideas common to many traditions.

The Ethics of Healing

Before you delve into the healing arts, you should understand what it means to enter into a healing relationship, with another and even with yourself. Your own relationship is not less important, but simply different. Being a healer involves entering into a sacred contract with the individual seeking healing. You are both

making a commitment. The important thing to realize is that the commitment is two-way. You cannot do everything for another. There must be work done on both ends.

Due to our modern medical establishment's model of health, many people look at their bodies as machines. Doctors and nurses are like mechanics, all-knowing specialists who will fix the machine. The patient is hardly involved in the process. Personally I find this model to be untrue. The patient's body is doing the healing, and hopefully all involved are performing actions that support this healing process, bringing balance to the natural healing dynamic.

Unfortunately many people subscribe to the same model for spiritual and psychological healing. They expect that somehow the therapist or healer will make it all better, like fixing a car. They don't realize that deep introspective work, self-responsibility, and ultimately self-reliance are the keys to healing. A healer can only help you on the path, guiding and supporting your process when you are open to it.

For this reason, I dislike the word healer. Though it is commonly used in magickal circles, where most understand the holistic model behind forms of magickal and energetic healing, those outside of the magickal communities hold the erroneous notion of healers as miracle workers. Some seemingly are, and miracles occur when the client is ready to heal. The healing is within their higher self's divine plan, and all the necessary ingredients are present, including their own introspection and responsibility.

I like the terms healing facilitator and healing practitioner. They make people more inquisitive: "I've never heard of a healing facilitator. What's that?" Such questions give you the opportunity to explain the model of cooperative healing, where the client plays as big a part in the process as the practitioner.

In this model of cooperative healing, it is important to understand that shamans traditionally do not go around "healing" everyone without permission. People who profess to do so are either on an ego trip or delusional. It's great to want to share your abilities with others and to be excited when discovering new talents. If you find a healing method that works for you, it's natural to want to share it with the world, but usually the whole world is not ready for it and doesn't want it. To heal people against their wishes, even with good intentions, interferes with their higher divine will. How do you know that the illness is not

serving a purpose in the greater scheme of things? You don't. If you try to heal it through your will, and not through a divine agreement and a balanced spiritually relationship, you can do more harm than good. Here is the realm of so-called black magick, and surprisingly it is more commonly found among nonwitch spiritual healers who want to save people who do not wish to be saved.

Shamans know the importance of the mutual relationship, and only work with others who are ready to do the work. You can make yourself and your services available, but only under rare circumstances, such as with direct and specific guidance from your allies, should you approach another who has not approached you. All recipients should give permission for the healing, and ideally conscious permission. If you do feel guided to do shamanic healing work with another who cannot give permission, such as someone who is unconscious, you can meditate and ask to connect with the person's higher self, and truly be open to the answer you receive. If you are granted permission in those circumstances, you can continue on with the healing. In cases of immediate harm or danger, follow your immediate intuition and hold the intention that the healing work be for the highest good.

Though you have learned healing techniques through spirit medicine and your relationships with your allies, I am not suggesting that if you complete this training you should go out and advertise your services as a healer. If you already do such work, you can add these techniques. If you are called to do such work by the gods, then by all means continue your training as needed. This book is primarily about personal healing and is not a full course on how to work with others. Such desires and experiences can arise out of personal healing, and will be covered in more detail in the final volume of the Temple of Witchcraft series, where the role of a minister and community leader will be explored. The sacred contract of the client and practitioner is much more involved, and requires discretion, compassion, boundaries, and exchange to be balanced and successful.

Nevertheless, as you continue on your journey as a shamanic witch, people might start approaching you, wanting you to help them with journey work, animal guides, divination, and spirit medicine. Family, friends, covenmates, and acquaintances seek out those with shamanic ability. At times, it can feel like a beacon has been lit that is invisible to you, but everybody else can see it. I

know I didn't plan on putting up a sign on my door to do healing work, but slowly others approached me, and my role expanded from tarot to aspects of healing. If you feel comfortable with this role, then by all means explore it if your higher guidance and allies encourage you to do so.

The most important thing a healing facilitator or shamanic witch can do is to be working actively on self-healing. To be a healer requires a sacred contract with yourself, to walk your talk. You cannot lead people into the depths of their own souls if you haven't been in your own. You must embody the principles of healing in your own thoughts, words, and deeds if you want to be credible. We are all human. We all make mistakes. We all have passions and rage, and are less than noble, but taking responsibility for such actions and thoughts sets the healer apart from others. Self-healing is a never-ending journey with many gifts and many plateaus, but it's not all talk. There is work you must do, including seeing other healers to help you on your own path. Some of the most incredible healers, who have done so much for the entire world, never see a single client. They never conduct a healing session or teach a class. Such healers live their lives out in a conscious way, walking the path of healing and responsibility. Such lives add to the consciousness fields of the human experiences (*ITOW,* chapter 7). We can all draw upon these templates. We can all grow, love, and heal, as the well-worn path has been cut for us by others. We can use it to find our own way to self-healing.

Sources of Sickness

One of the first things you learned in the practice of shamanic witchcraft was the basic three-plane cosmology and the three selves intrinsic to each plane. Each self and plane is associated with a variety of spiritual allies, lessons, gifts, and dangers. Health, from the shamanic perspective, is the living balance between these selves and your allies in each world. Sickness is something that encourages imbalance and miscommunication. Medicine is a force that will restore the proper balance between the three selves.

Shamanic healing complements all other forms of metaphysical healing. In fact, you could argue that such systems originally had shamanic roots, which were revealed to the seers who worked between worlds and later codified into a system.

Our three-world model parallels more mainstream holistic thinking quite well. Healing is the balance of our various selves—our mind, body, and spirit. Illness has an energetic root. Imbalanced thoughts and emotions create a slowdown or stagnation in the flow of personal energy. They, in turn, cause energetic buildups that manifest as unhealthy psychological patterns, illnesses, and injuries. Various forms of therapy, including energy work and Eastern medicine, work on removing the root of the imbalance, the energetic block, thereby restoring health.

From the shaman's perspective, such breakdowns occur due to miscommunication. The middle self is not listening to the higher self. Messages are not getting through because of the blocks. Sickness and injury are the last-ditch strategies the other selves have to make the middle self listen. The illnesses are coded messages, yet most humans have lost the decoder.

Metaphysical healers relate illness or an afflicted body part to chakras, planets, zodiac signs, and Qabalah in order to divine its spiritual meaning. Heart and circulatory issues are related to love. Throat issues are linked to communication. Feet problems are connected to grounding. After a while, the explanations become easy to see symbolically, though they are insufficient for those with critical illnesses. They do, however, provide a good starting point in your quest to understand the message of the illness. In fact, some would say your other selves partnered with sickness spirits to bring you the message.

Blame is often misunderstood in spirit healing. Those with a debilitating illness or injury are told that it is a lesson they are learning or a message they refused to hear, and feel they are being blamed for the illness or injury. In their experience, they had no conscious knowledge of it, so how can they be to blame? It's a very strong point, and one I've faced again and again in my own practice.

The issue is not so much about blame as it is about responsibility. Those who understand the Hermetic principles, particularly the Principle of Correspondence and the Principle of Cause and Effect (*ITOW,* chapter 8), understand that it's not about blame. Such changes in your body, even illnesses and injuries, correspond to inner thoughts, emotions, and even karma. One reflects the other. It's not about taking or escaping blame. It's about facing the current reality and then looking to what thoughts, emotions, and actions can bring corresponding healing changes to the situation. Though many

people initially feel disempowered, it is a very empowering practice. It takes you out of the machine/mechanic paradigm and into becoming the author of not only your own health, but also your own life.

In a shamanic context, such changes are made through the use of spirit allies and their medicine. Introducing a new energy into your system brings corresponding changes. By aligning your relationship with nature, you bring balance. The following are some of the potential sources of illness. Many of them might already be familiar to you through your work on the material in *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.* As you continue to read, you might see situations that strike a chord within you, a potential imbalance you carry. Reflect on it before acting, but if you decide to delve deeper, you have a launching point from which to look at your own healing, either through your own healing work or with facilitation from another shamanic practitioner.

Imbalance of the Three Minds

Fundamental to all other forms of illness, an imbalance of the higher, lower, and middle selves is usually a significant part of illness, be it physical or spiritual. Since so many people deny the existence of a higher power and ignore their own intuition, dreams, and spirit allies, such imbalances become a normal way of life, and those living in balance are sometimes viewed as crazy. Traumatic experiences, relationships, and illnesses manifest as a means for your higher self and allies to communicate with you, urging you to find balance in the energy you are carrying. They do not create problems as a form of punishment, but rather your own actions and inactions create corresponding changes in your life. They simply use them as a vehicle for communication. As you walk a spiritual path, you will notice that anyone, witch or not, who meditates or journals regularly, who does ritual and other work where the mind is quieted and messages can be given, seems to move through the world more effortlessly, with fewer traumas, crises, and illnesses. They see the winds coming before the storm hits, and can take shelter if needed. Most of us move through life oblivious, until lightning strikes and we wonder, how did this storm gather?

Loss of Animal Guardian Spirit

Primary to other forms of illness is a loss of power, particularly your own medicine power in the form of your animal guardian spirit. Such spirits are

meant to guard you and guide you through this world and others, protecting you from the pitfalls of misfortune and the spirits of sickness and illness. If you are not connected to your animal guardian on any level, or somehow dishonor it, you are open to difficulties. Likewise, you may evoke forces based on your actions in this life and others that attract spirits that are more powerful than your guardian spirit, and then you must deal with the situation.

Unwanted Thoughtforms

A thoughtform is a packet of energy created from thought and will with a purpose or program in mind. Consciously created thoughtforms manifest through affirmations, and are the basis of spellcraft. Unconsciously created thoughtforms, created from repeated thoughts that are trapped in the aura, are considered unwanted thoughtforms. They psychically repeat their self-destructive mantras. People who continue to think that they will fail create thoughtforms that remind them of failure. Those who complain about being stuck, regardless of the place in their life, suffer from an unknown thoughtform conducting unhealthy messages in that area of life. To the shaman, unwanted thoughtforms are like minor sickness spirits, or “artificial” spirits created by people.

Auric Holes

The energy field around the body is our sense of personal space and boundary. Those with a strong aura have a strong, healthy sense of boundary, both physically and psychically. Many people suffer from an overly extended or contracted aura, causing boundary issues. Others suffer from what psychics perceive to be leaks, tears, rips, or holes in the aura, where vital life force is released. Those with many holes are lethargic and drained. This creates a weak zone where unwanted thoughtforms and sickness spirits can enter, creating further problems.

Energetic Cords

Cords are unhealthy energetic links between two people. Cords can link people through the aura, through specific body parts, or most likely through the chakras. Cords are commonly found at the root, belly, solar plexus, heart, back, and back of the head. These circuits, created through inappropriate relationships, allow one person to drain the energy of another. They create

unhealthy dependencies that are based in unhealthy emotions. Most people are not even conscious they have them. If there are people from whom you try to break away, yet can't, you might have cords to them. If there are people from whom you have distanced yourself, yet they can "pull" your energy or push you off center with their words and deeds where you would otherwise be detached, then you probably have a cord. These people are not necessarily evil or intentionally being a psychic vampire. They are simply in an inappropriate relationship with you.

Past-Life Karma

The consequences of our past actions can travel with us. You already learned about the effects of past-life vows in the previous chapter. The results of your past actions, or karma, can play a role in the life you manifest and in your health on all levels. Cords can be karmic, brought into this life from a previous incarnation.

Magickal and Psychic Attack

So much of old folk magick involves protecting yourself and loved ones from curses, the evil eye, and other harmful attacks. In a world where most everyone believed in magick, such attacks were more common. I would love to say that such attacks have ceased, but unfortunately they have not. A witch will seek to restore balance to life, personal or community, and at times must deal with such attacks. Sometimes the attack is not directly from a harmful practitioner, but from an uncontrolled spirit, elemental, or familiar. Such magick and psychic attacks, from a human or spirit, can materialize as a run of bad luck, sudden illness or injury, horrific nightmares, recurring pains, or even aspects of soul sickness. Intuition and a proper divination must be followed to make sure the source of such a problem is really an attack, and not something self-created. Victims of such attacks would be well advised to reflect on why they attracted such an experience, and what could be learned from it.

Shadow Imbalance

Your traditional three selves can be out of harmony, but in more serious cases your shadow self is overactive. Due to lack of self-knowledge, or ignoring shadow issues, particularly for a long time, the shadow-self energy manifests difficulties in life to bring your conscious self into balance with the shadow.

Soul Sickness

Soul sickness is an imbalance or damage of your fundamental core self. Your soul doesn't refer to your higher, lower, or middle self specifically in this case. Each could be considered a soul in its own right. Soul sickness is the injury of any of these core identities.

These are not the only sources of illness, but they give you a good starting place when trying to determine why you or another is impaired.

Soul Sickness

Beyond the traditional imbalances and issues that are a typical part of human existence lies soul sickness. Soul sickness is usually characterized by severe trauma, in this life or previous ones, or cumulative long-term damage from spiritually harsh conditions. Such experiences might not seem overly traumatic in retrospect, since we become desensitized to them, but at the time, they created an imbalance at a fundamental level.

In my experience, even if no traumas have occurred in this life, almost everybody has some form of soul sickness. The most typical form of soul sickness is called soul loss. Though many people are not aware of soul loss, they can heal soul loss with nonshamanic techniques, with or without a healing facilitator, though the shamanic techniques tend to be the most direct and powerful methods of healing. Traditional therapies, energy work, and spiritual exploration can be great healing tools, but a shamanic understanding of such imbalances makes the healing process much smoother.

I had a client who was personally experienced in using mainstream psychology and psychiatry to heal severe past abuse. She commented that it would have been very helpful if she had understood her illness in a shamanic context from the very beginning. Traditional therapy was integral to her healing, but her traditional doctors and counselors were amazed at how much progress she made as she incorporated shamanic and magickal techniques into her healing.

The following is a range of soul imbalances you may experience yourself or help others with in their healing process.

Soul Fragmentation/Loss

When faced with a stressful or painful situation that your consciousness cannot handle, the part of your consciousness that feels unsafe can disassociate from you and leave your core self. This fragmentation not only occurs in this life, but also occurred in past lives, leaving vacant spaces that are filled by other, usually unbalanced energies. This occurs when people are shocked in some way. Their consciousness disassociates from the body to escape pain. It can be similar to an out-of-body experience, since those in shock regularly say they were aware of things, but felt like they were looking down at the situation from above. When the core identity reintegrates with the body and handles the shock, a part of the core identity refuses to return, and will travel to the other worlds in search of solace, healing, and peace. Many Mongolian shamans don't believe in fragmentation, but rather that multiple individual souls exist within one person, and with soul loss, one entire soul is lost. My experience has been more fragmentary, but that is what I was initially taught, so I think that subjective, otherworldly experiences will conform to how you have been trained. Though my experience and tradition say that these soul fragments usually journey to the Underworld, other traditions find them escaping to the Upper World. These fragments can even attach themselves to people who make them feel safe.

To heal soul fragmentation, the practitioner must help the client create a safe space for the return of the soul fragment, and then journey to find the soul fragment and convince it to return. The soul fragment can be personified, sometimes looking like the client when the trauma occurred, and can communicate information to the healer about why it left. I've had soul fragments tell me about traumas and abuses that happened in early childhood, and the client never told me this information directly. When I returned with the information, the client was shocked. Then we could work on the issue and convince the soul fragment to come back. Once returned, soul fragments give a sense of peace, clarity, completeness, and personal power.

Soul Shock

Also known as ghost walking, soul shock occurs when a large part of your consciousness detaches from your body, usually due to a traumatic incident or long-term exposure to trauma. Normally when someone goes into shock, their energy leaves the body, seeking to escape the pain and trauma. And normally

the energy will return as the person recovers from the shock. In soul shock, the person never truly recovers and the energy never returns. The person may become functional in day-to-day life, but not truly healthy. They are like walking ghosts, taking little pleasure in life and finding it difficult to maintain relationships. The remedy is not easy. First the situation that caused the shock needs to be addressed, to create a safe environment for the energy to return. The shamanic practitioner can journey to other worlds to retrieve and integrate the energy, much like what is done with soul fragmentation. The spirit medicine of the Star of Bethlehem flower helps integrate your energy back into your body after a trauma or shock. Grounding stone medicine, such as onyx and smoky quartz, can help maintain the integration of your consciousness in your body.

Spirit Attachment

Spirit attachment is almost the opposite of the previous imbalances where your own energy is lost. Instead, the energy of another spirit is attached to your own and interferes with your normal energy flow. Soul fragmentation or shock can create a space for the spirit to attach, though such space is not required. Sometimes the attaching spirits seem to come from an outside source, a separate entity. They are either accidentally trapped in your energy, or are purposely and maliciously there to fulfill their own wishes or the wishes of a harmful practitioner who summoned them. Other times, they are powerful thoughtforms that take on a life of their own. These “spirits of trauma” or “memory demons,” as they are known to some spirit healers of Afghanistan, can manifest as malevolent spirits. Other traditions refer to developed thoughtforms that turn parasitic or vampiric as larvae. They are human-created, and not necessarily sentient spirits, and can be cleared in much the same way thoughtforms are. Spirit attachments can come from the faery realm. While most faeries we encounter are allies, or at least neutral if we treat them with respect, some are malicious. The geirt coimitheth, translated as “joint-eater” or “just-halver,” is a faery that parasitically joins with its victim. As the human eats, the energy of the food is consumed by the faery while its host wastes away. Unlike other more typical energy blocks, attached spirits will actively work to impede your progress because they fear your spiritual liberation will destroy them. The remedy for spirit attachment is called spirit

extraction, a technique that will be covered later in this chapter.

Divine Marriage Imbalance

Each of us has an inner masculine energy and an inner feminine energy. They are described in various traditions with key images and are often personified. In popular psychology, they are known as the anima and animus. Within our androgynous soul they represent the unique balance of male/female energy within us. The relationship between the two energies is like a marriage, and it is the first relationship we carry with us. Due to our past, our family, or our society, we are at odds with one or both of these energies, embodied as an inner queen and king or inner mother and father. Their conflict is reflective of the conflict within our own soul. Our inner king and queen may imprint relationship patterns we see in our family and friends. These imprints affect the way we have relationships—either seeking completion from others or lacking any interest in relationships. To remedy such imbalances, we must actively engage in a relationship with these beings. A shamanic practitioner starts the healing process between the inner queen and king, initiating a healthy dialogue. The shaman acts as an intermediary who brings such issues to full consciousness, but balancing such a relationship is the job of the client.

Elemental Imbalance

Elemental imbalance is also known as divine family imbalance or medicine shield imbalance. Just as we have a relationship between the inner king and queen, in a shamanic context we have a relationship with the four directions and the inner powers they mediate—the four elements. Different traditions teach different manifestations of the four elements. Common manifestations are the inner mother for earth, the inner child for water, the inner father for air, and either the inner teacher or lover for fire. Other traditions may simply see your totemic allies as representative of the four elements, without human personification. The imbalance between the relationships in this family can affect your health and well-being on all levels. We each have a unique balance of the elements. They do not all need to be equal. Some witches naturally resonate with one element over the others, and that is perfectly fine. The ideal is to find the unique balance that is correct for you. The remedy for elemental imbalance is much like that of the divine marriage imbalance, though there are added techniques. Working with the elements through ritual, meditation, energy

work, and even herbs and foods associated with the elements can help bring awareness and balance.

Spirit Diagnosis

The methods of shamanic diagnosis are probably as varied as the different kinds of shamanic practitioners you poll. Here are some basic themes used in many traditions, though remember that intuition is frequently your strongest ally in these matters.

Consultation

The first step is usually speaking with the potential client and getting an understanding of what the problem is and what the client expects from the shamanic practitioner. This is essential, because it starts a dialogue where you can explain both your role and your client's role in the healing process. After asking the more obvious questions of why the client has come and what the problem is, some common questions asked by shamanic practitioners include the following:

- Have you recently had any traumatic experiences? This could be on the physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual level.
- Did you have any significant traumatic experiences in the past, in particular during your formative childhood years?
- Have you had any contact with spiritual entities? If so, what kind? Was it helpful or harmful to you? Were they spirits of the deceased, or others?
- Have you had any recent contact with death—death of a friend, family member, or loved one?
- Do you have any known enemies who wish you harm? Do they practice any magick, or have access to anyone who does? Even if they don't practice magick, sheer force of will can be like a psychic attack, even if the person doesn't believe in psychic abilities.
- Have you killed anyone or anything needlessly or maliciously? I know that sounds silly, but it's a traditional question. It's about karmic debt and spirit connections. The spirit in which something dies is as important as the actual death. Killing someone who meant to kill your family has a different

energy, the energy of protection, than maliciously killing a rival.

These are questions you can also ask yourself in times of difficulty. Once you have an idea of the situation, the type of imbalance might be glaringly obvious to you, and then the course of action clear. If not, you can continue on to the other techniques with a clear idea in mind of what questions to ask.

Divination

Divination can provide an unbiased opinion in psychic diagnosis, particularly when dealing with issues of psychic attack. Use whatever form of divination you favor, including tarot, runes, or ogham sticks. I learned a method of rubbing a raw egg over the body of my client, and then cracking it open over a crystal glass filled with water. Next I scry into the egg, looking for symbols and messages to guide me in the situation, much like divination in tea leaves.

Psychic Ability

Simple intuitive psychic ability can and should be used in diagnosis. The psychic skills developed in *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft* come in handy for this work.

Exploratory Journey/Consulting with the Spirits

Before doing a healing journey, the shaman can perform an exploratory journey. Just like a medicine retrieval journey, the shaman lies down next to the client and does a journey with this connection in mind. Questions about the situation, and how best to handle it, are in the forefront of the practitioner's mind. The shaman visits her own allies, or the allies of the client, to understand the nature of the situation. The exploratory or consulting journey may turn into a healing journey, though usually the shaman returns first, and the nature of the situation is discussed with the client before actions with far-reaching consequences are taken.

Once the nature of the soul imbalance has been determined, the shaman can proceed with the proper techniques and allies to restore balance.

Paths of Healing

With an understanding of the potential soul imbalances, you can walk the path of healing. Each healing is individual and unique. A book or teacher can give

guidelines to the process. Some will give specific formulas, rituals, and spells like prescriptions, but ultimately each healing is as unique as the individual experiencing it. Some are instantaneous and seemingly miraculous. Others are long and drawn out, occurring slowly over time. Some occur with ease and grace, while others have more traumatic themes.

Here are several paths of shamanic healing that you can incorporate into your own healing experience. They are also tools for your path if you work with others in a healing practice. They are not the only tools. A variety of modalities, techniques, and rituals exist, and some can be easily incorporated into this work.

The most powerful path of shamanic healing is a personal and direct relationship with your allies. Ultimately they will tell you what to do in any situation, giving you advice and options that will suit you. If your allies and higher self and the allies and higher self of your client tell you to jump around counterclockwise on one foot singing "The Itsy Bitsy Spider," then try it. There is probably a good reason for it, and it will work better than anything preformulated. I've been asked to say or do things that seem strange to me during a session, such as relay messages from the spirit guides that I personally don't understand, or try techniques I've never seen in a book or been taught, but when I trust and follow that spirit guidance, amazing things happen.

Aura-Healing Techniques

Unwanted thoughtforms, auric holes, and energetic cords can be healed through meditative and energy techniques. Through will and imagination, you can release the energies that do not serve your highest good, and repair damaged energy patterns. You can find detailed meditations on this type of healing in chapter 11 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.* You can guide a client through them, or perform the empowered visualizations yourself, upon the client's aura.

Body Spirit Journey

Your body is composed of many spirits. The elemental and devic forces are a part of your body, and you can communicate with the spirit of your body directly to be warned of imbalances and what to do about them. My first experience with "body talking" was when my doctor told me my liver enzymes

were way too high, though I had no major risk factors. He wanted to do a biopsy, but I had him wait. I meditated to connect with my liver. I asked it what the root of the problem was, and it told me "fear and anger." I was stunned and had no idea what that meant, until a practitioner of Chinese medicine told me that the liver is the "throne of anger" and the etheric liver processes our emotional toxins just as the physical liver processes the physical toxins. One can overtax the other. I realized through counseling and flower essence therapy that I was holding on to a lot of fear and anger. After a three-month intensive introspection period of working with these tools, my liver enzymes went back down to normal, much to my doctor's surprise.

Healing Chambers

A healing chamber is a zone of sacred space where intense healings and awareness can occur. The gateway of healing, visited in the inner temple (*ITOW,* chapter 14), is one such chamber. In a shamanic context, such chambers are embodied by caves or, in particular, cauldrons. The deities will dunk the journeyer into a sacred cauldron of healing and awareness. A healing chamber can also manifest in the Middle World through ritual.

Spirit Medicine

Sometimes an infusion of a particularly healing energy—animal, plant, mineral, or anything else—can be the initiation of a dramatic healing process. Once we receive that spirit medicine, we must consciously work with it through meditations and rituals. Sometimes receiving an animal medicine is not the end of a healing, but the start of a new relationship with that animal spirit. The healing only takes effect if we consciously choose to build a relationship with that spirit.

Sickness Spirit Allies

Sickness spirits are the embodiments of illness. Each illness has its overarching spirit that contains the intelligence and the experience of that illness, including the knowledge of all of those whom the illness has afflicted. Though many shamans see the sickness spirits as the enemy to healing, some partner with the sickness spirits and learn their secrets. Such a paradigm shift can be quite dramatic for the shaman and the client. It's hard to think of disease as an ally or teacher, but it can be. I have a friend and fellow witch

who refers to HIV as his teacher. A shaman who has knowledge of a particular sickness spirit, has a partnership with it, will more likely be able to help someone else heal from it.

Shamanic Combat

Though combating an illness is not always necessary to heal successfully, for those on the warrior path combating the illness in the shamanic worlds is a viable technique. Particularly in the case of psychic or magickal attack, shamanic combat seeks not to destroy the other practitioner, perpetuating the cycle of violence, but to be the spiritual warrior, acting as a protector and simply transforming the unbalanced energy. In an experience where I felt I was undergoing harm from an outside practitioner, a shamanic healer did an exploratory journey, not knowing my concern, and found a scorpion fighting a spider in my throat chakra. The spider, one of my animal totems, appeared to be losing. She grabbed the scorpion, gave it to her animal guide to remove and neutralize, and helped the spider back into its rightful place. Then she did energy work to heal any holes in my aura and smooth things over. That broke the "curse," and other practitioners noticed the change in my energy immediately. I protected myself from any further harm through the use of the bottle spell (*OTOW,* chapter 13).

Soul Retrieval/Balance

The various forms of soul sickness can be healed through their specific remedies. The energies of the soul bodies can be brought into balance, and missing aspects retrieved. This is accomplished either by the one in need doing such journeys and meditation, and then following them up with real-world actions to maintain the balance, or through healing journey and ritual by a shamanic practitioner, also followed up by real-world action on the part of the recipient.

Hands-on Healing

Hands-on energy healing is found in almost all mystical cultures, from mystical Christians to traditional shamans. Working with refined and dense energies of the worlds through Exercise 6: Tree Breathing, you can harness these energies and circulate them through the hands or a specific body chakra, and then project them out into another person or area to infuse the recipient with

healing, balanced, loving energies. Healing spirit allies, particularly those with a powerful presence, can act as conduits to healing energies. The shamanic witch can use the same techniques to infuse water, oil, or potions to create a healing solution that can be given to a client for later use.

Shamanic Surgery

Shamanic surgery, also called psychic surgery in some areas, is the process of using these healing concepts to remove unwanted energies from the body and aura. Thoughtforms, attached spirits, and entities can all be removed and neutralized through shamanic surgery. The shamanic practitioner energetically reaches into the client and extracts the unwanted energies. Shamanic surgery is a wonderful, yet complicated form of healing covered in detail later in this chapter.

Exploring the Healing Paths

The following are exercises to put the various techniques just described into practice for your own healing. Perform only the exercises that you feel called to do at this time, but know the tools are available to you whenever you need them.

Spirit body journeys, or what I like to call body-talking meditations, can be done in several ways. Body journeys are done when you feel like there is something wrong, out of balance in the body, but you are not sure what is out of balance, or how to resolve it. It is particularly good if a medical practitioner has raised concerns, and you want to understand the spiritual aspect of it. If you have had any traumatic accidents, you might be holding imbalanced energy in that part of your body. Even past-life injuries can be stored in your body. They can manifest as unwanted, unhealthy spirits.

Exercise 32

Spirit Body Journey

Start your journey in the traditional way, as you did in the previous journey exercises, but instead of journeying into the World Tree, step out of your body, and view it as the World Tree. Then journey into your body World Tree, where each part of your body is like a different land. If you'd rather meditate without

the drumming, do a traditional meditation, entering an altered consciousness, and imagine your consciousness descending from your head into the various organs and body systems. This technique usually yields more literal experiences and more direct communication when compared to the shamanic version.

If you are not sure where the problem is, you can “cruise” each organ and system, looking for messages and information. You can also zero in on a specific organ or system. Let your allies and intuition guide you through the process. When you are in a place where you feel there is an imbalance, imagine that part of your body like an individual entity, a potential ally. Ask it questions. Ask what’s wrong, and what you can do to heal the situation. It is important to discern what your body is telling you directly, and through sensations, as opposed to what your mind is anticipating.

Each part of the body—each system, organ, and even individual cell—is like a spirit to the shaman. The overall body may be like a shamanic landscape, but the land is made of tree, plant, and stone spirits. The body is made of organ, cell, and mineral spirits. We each have nature spirits and elementals comprising the physical components of our bodies. Like a family, those spirits can get along well, or have miscommunications. Illness occurs when two parts of the body aren’t communicating well with each other. It’s just like when two family members are not communicating well, and the overall health of the family suffers.

Through a journey, you can enter into the situation and play moderator, taking in different points of view and different needs, and smoothing the lines of communication between your body spirits. This in itself can create health, efficiency, and balance in your bodily systems.

When you are done, thank this ally, and return to normal consciousness. Continue to build your relationship with this body ally, and check in regularly to see if things are improving.

I do this exercise regularly, usually at least four times a year, near the solar holidays. I like to really take the time to be open to my body’s message and balance things before they become a problem. I also think it is important to regularly go through the entire body in a meditative journey, and thank every part of your body for its health and daily service. Tell your body how much you love and appreciate it.

Healing chambers are another powerful way to maintain health and bring about healing changes. Like the previous exercise, there are two ways to approach working with healing chambers—through journey/meditation on the inner planes, or evocation through ritual.

Exercise 33

Healing Chambers

To work on the inner planes with a healing chamber, you can enter it consciously, as you entered into your gateway of healing in the inner temple, but usually a healing chamber will be presented in shamanic journey spontaneously, as needed. A spirit ally will guide you to the chamber, and show you how to enter it or use it. Most healing chambers will be presented to you by divine figures, usually through the image of the cauldron. The Crone goddesses and father gods, figures such as Cerridwen, Dagda, and Bran, are associated with the cauldron. The most famous of the cauldrons is the Gundestrup (Figure 35). The Gundestrup cauldron is a Celtic artifact that was discovered in a peat moss bog in Denmark. The silver cauldron depicts many mythic scenes, most noticeably a stag-horned god believed to be Cernunnos. Among the various divinities depicted in ritual poses is another scene where figures are being plunged into a cauldron. Some interpret it as a ritual sacrifice, but others look to the myths of death and rebirth, as fallen warriors are plunged into the cauldron and returned to life, in this world or perhaps in another. The resurrected soldiers of myths came back to life mute, unable to speak of what they had seen in the other worlds. This is another common theme of the mysteries of the Underworld—death and rebirth. Many in our modern culture who have had a near-death experience find it difficult to put their extraordinary experience into words that really convey their meaning.

I didn't have much personal experience with Underworld cauldrons until I began teaching the shamanic aspects of witchcraft. I had a cauldron on my altar, and used it to burn spells and mix things, but I did not ever envision one in my meditations. Over the course of teaching, several students shared that a goddess or god would urge them to drink from a cauldron, enter the cauldron, or even dunk them or attempt to drown them in the cauldron. In these healing

chambers, there is a sense of energy moving, as if certain energies are being released and new energies are being integrated, like whatever is not vital is being cooked away and the best parts of you are being refined. Through these experiences, sometimes beautiful and peaceful and other times distressing and painful, they returned from the journey changed. The changes were sometimes profound and visible to the rest of the class, while other times they were subtle and still being integrated. But each student felt their experience in these cauldron healing chambers was a valuable part of their healing, so much so that I sought out my own cauldron healing experience.

Each cauldron can be of a different metal or have a different color of liquid in it. I talked to one person who experienced otherworldly healing cauldrons created from the seven metals of the planets. The divine figure will bid you to drink the healing broth, or will submerge you into the cauldron. They will put you in, and take you out when the process is complete. Sometimes they will warn you about what you will experience in the cauldron, or they will explain the purpose of the healing or empowerment. Other times they will not, leaving you to figure it out yourself.

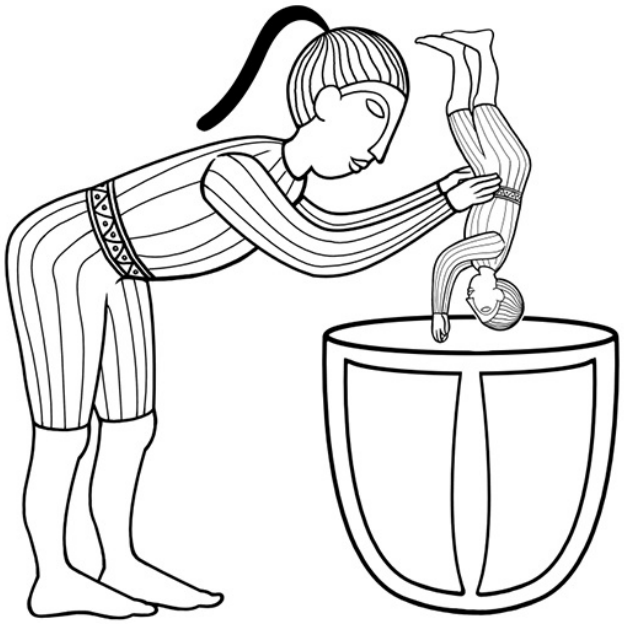


Figure 35: *Gundestrup Cauldron—Cauldron of Resurrection*

Your second healing chamber option is to create a sacred space in the physical world by evoking your spirit team. I've heard this called "coning" or a "four-point healing field" by those in more New Age traditions, but my shamanic guides have urged me to do this nontraditional technique.

Healing chambers are much like wide-awake meditation, where you are connected to your guides, yet don't have to do any of the "work." You don't have to visualize, journey, or do anything once you set up the field. You can create the sacred space with a magick circle or through a shamanic smudging ritual. It is also helpful to have a timer or timed music to gauge the length of your session.

To create the healing energy field, call upon your healing spirit allies. Ask to connect to "all my healing spirit guides that are correct and good for me at this time. So mote it be." You can call upon your higher self, and any specific guides you want to work with. You can also call upon specific divinities with whom you feel a connection to aid you. Lie down and relax. If you have a specific issue you want to work on—physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—state it out loud. In fact, I find it very helpful to talk out loud during the entire session. Speak about your perceptions of spirits and what feelings and thoughts come across your mind.

With this evocation, you could feel a shift in the energy around you. You could sense your guides moving around you, much like a body worker or energy healer working on your body.

You might be intuitively "told" by your allies that the session is done, or simply feel a shift in the energy. You can also use muscle testing (*ITOW,* exercise 28) to ask if the session is done or not. You can use such yes/no techniques to find out if your allies want another session scheduled, and when. When done, thank and release your spirit allies. Release the space if you cast a circle. Notice the shifts in your body and subtle energies.

If you are not sure what to do for an intention, I suggest that your first healing session be on healing your relationships, past and present. Take time to run through the relationships in your life, identifying those that have an unresolved emotional charge. Ask the spirits to help you do this. Start with your relationship to yourself, and then go through your relationships with your family —current family members, as well as those who are estranged, deceased, or otherwise not present. Next go through your significant friends, those currently in your life and all strong friendships from the past. Then go through the list of people who are in your life but do not stir a strong emotion in you. Lastly, go through anyone you have considered to be your enemy.

Hands-on healing is a powerful practice to bring healing energy to others, allowing their own bodies and auras to heal. The important thing in any hands-on healing is to allow the energy to flow, and not force it. Allowing higher divine powers to guide the process is highly recommended for the higher good of both you as a practitioner and the receiver.

Exercise 34

Hands-on Healing

Start by evoking your higher self and healing guides to be with you. Ask to connect to the higher self and guides of the recipient. Ask that the healing energy flow for the highest good, harming none. Start Exercise 6: Tree Breathing, and feel the energy flow through you. Focus on the harmonizing intention of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust. Follow any intuitive promptings you get from your guides. Place your hands on the recipient, and using your will, let the energy flow through your hands and into the recipient. Move your hand positions as you are intuitively guided.

When done, let the energy flow gradually reduce as you ease your pranic tree breathing. Break contact, and feel your energy separate from the recipient. Thank and release the recipient's higher self and guides, as well as your own. Although the tree breathing should keep you grounded, ground more if necessary, and help the recipient ground as well. Such an influx of new, pure energy can create a lightheaded sensation.

For an alternate form of hands-on healing, you can connect with a spirit guide as the source of energy. Much like absorbing energy from the upper and lower realms through tree breathing, you draw upon the energy coming through your healing spirit guide. The spirit acts as a gateway, or transformer, safely down stepping the energy to pass through a human healer, and into the recipient. The spirit's natural divine intelligence helps guide the process, and may even give you specific symbols, affirmations, or rituals to engage this particular form of healing. Speak to your healing spirit guides for more instructions on this technique, as each ally will do it differently.

Hands-on healing can be used in conjunction with healing light (*ITOW,* chapter 10) or the psychic-surgery technique outlined next.

Psychic Surgery

Shamanic surgery is a powerful yet misunderstood technique. Those with no mystical understanding look at psychic surgery as misguided at best, and as a sham at worst. To the mystically inclined, the premise is simple. If all things, including illness or injury, have an underlying energetic pattern, then an energetic pattern can be removed from the body through shamanic surgery. The illness can no longer support itself without its etheric "blueprint," and the body is able to heal itself more easily. The energetic pattern is no longer blocking the healing. With such removals, the client processes the underlying thoughts, feelings, or even karma that is involved in the energetic template, consciously or unconsciously.

The rituals of shamanic surgery involve what looks to be play-acting, with sweeping, grabbing, and, popular among certain traditions, sucking. Anthropologists who observed and reported on psychic surgery saw medicine men with a special tube over a patient "sucking the illness out." As a result, the shaman would have a small stone or even an insect in his mouth. The object would then be cast away, buried, or stamped on to banish the illness.

These outside observers thought the shaman was tricking the client into thinking the illness was a rock or creature being sucked out, though I'm sure the patient understood the process far better than the scientists. The object acts as a receptacle for the unwanted ill energy to ensure that the shaman does not swallow it. The sickness spirit is sucked out, and with the obstacle removed, the patient's own allies are then able to help the healing process along.

The mistrust of psychic surgery was compounded by the skepticism generated from many other less shamanically inclined practitioners. Some claimed to be doing actual physical surgery with no tools, cutting and mending psychically, and literally and immediately removing physical things like tumors. Though I have never observed such practitioners, I have known people who swear by them. Others swear that they are charlatans and that such physical surgery with no tools is not possible. Mainstream society does not distinguish between physical psychic surgery and spiritual psychic surgery. When I speak of shamanic surgery in this book, though it can have great physical healing effects, I am not speaking about one literally going in and physically removing

things from the body. I am talking about removing the energetic patterns, the spirits of illness.

Although different cultures and traditions use different rituals and tools to perform shamanic surgery, these rituals are all based on the same principles. The most powerful shamanic-surgery sessions I have been involved in have also included the use of invocation in the ritual, but this is not necessary. Though I describe the use of basic hand movements, you can try techniques such as sucking if your allies encourage you to do so.

Here is the basic technique for shamanic surgery. Though the instructions are framed for working with a client, to actively engage the client as a partner in healing, you can modify them and try it on yourself. I have had tremendous success using shamanic surgery to remove or alleviate aches and pains, headaches, tension, stress, and nervous stomach. You can even use it for viral and bacterial removal and to cleanse toxins, including alcohol and other controlled substances. By removing the spirit of such substance, you neutralize much of its physical power.

Step One

Start by talking with the client. Discuss the situation at hand, and what needs to be removed. Is it a physical illness or injury? What led up to it? If not, is it an emotional or mental pattern that needs to be released? You can energetically scan the aura (*ITOW,* chapters 5 and 11) to feel where there may be energetic blocks. If the imbalances are near particular chakras or body parts, this gives you a reference point to talk about those life challenges. You can use a pendulum (*ITOW,* chapter 13) to measure each chakra. Traditionally, if you get a clockwise “yes” response, the chakra is opened and balanced in a healthy way. If you get a counterclockwise “no” movement, there is an imbalance. These are symbolic associations, not literal movements of energy, as some people believe.

Step Two

Next, ask your client questions to provoke symbols and images to be used. Try questions such as these:

If this block is within your body, where would it be?

If this block has a color, what would the color be?

If this block has a texture, how would it feel to the touch?

If this block has a temperature, what would it be?

If this block has a sound, what would it sound like?

If this block has a smell, what would it smell like?

If this block has a taste, what would it taste like?

If this block has a name, what would it be called?

The answers will help you and your client build an image of the energy you both want to remove. By assigning it qualities from the client's initial responses, you get something close to the true energy of the block. The name is the hardest and most important question. Clients who answer it with their initial, unfiltered thought are often startled when they give the name of a family member or friend who causes them stress. Such responses are the most honest and helpful in the healing world.

Step Three

Repeat the description to the client. Describe the block, and ask the client to sense it. See if you can energetically sense it as you scan the aura again.

Step Four

If you have not already called upon higher guidance, do so now. I usually ask for my higher self and healing guides and those of my client as we start the session, asking either out loud or silently. I would make sure the space is cleansed before starting the healing. At this point, if I was doing a formal ritual or casting a magick circle or healing chamber, I would do so now.

Step Five

Imagine elongating your finger by taking one hand and "stretching out" the fingertips of the other hand. Do this until you feel like the aura of your fingers has extended outward, able to reach deep into the body, when your physical fingertips are resting on the surface of the client's body. This process is much like shapeshifting through play-acting, and you may feel your hands take on the image of claws, scissors, blades, or spoons.

Step Six

Through a combination of intent, movement, and visualization, imagine reaching

into the client and pulling out the jointly created image of the block. I involve the client by telling them to help me by pushing. I suggest they take a deep breath, and when I say “now,” they blow and push while I pull. I have even guided clients in doing their own psychic surgery, when such clients need personal empowerment to know they can do things on their own. Do this as many times as needed. I usually do it three times, though some practitioners do it as many as twenty.

Step Seven

Neutralize the unwanted energy. Some practitioners have a bowl of sea salt or sea salt and water into which they put the energy block. They then dispose of the salt (and water) into the earth after the session. Others put the energy into a crystal, and then cleanse the crystal after the session. If you have direct conscious contact with your healing guides, you can pass the energy to your guides to dispose of. I usually put the energy directly into the floor, willing it into the earth and imagining violet cleansing light around it. I usually draw a banishing pentagram over the spot in the floor where I placed the energy, to banish all harm completely. Whatever you do, don’t take the block into your body, or you will absorb its harmful energy. This is a common yet usually unconscious error of healers. They take on the illness of their clients. Most do it unconsciously, though some intend it, thinking they can banish illness from their body more easily than from the client’s. Either way, this causes more problems, such as unintentionally taking on the client’s illness, and is easily avoided.

Step Eight

Fill the “empty” space left by the removed block with pure energy, using the hands-on healing technique in Exercise 34. You could also fill it with any other form of energy or medicine you are guided to use. You might visualize light or draw upon a spirit medicine. Do not use your own personal energy, or you will end up feeling drained and sick yourself. Repeat the entire technique on any other blocked points.

Step Nine

Cleanse yourself and return to normal waking consciousness. Return your fingers to normal by reversing your “growing” actions. Next, I like to fill myself

with cleansing violet light to make sure I have not absorbed anything, and then fill the room with the same cleansing light. You can cleanse yourself and the room again with a Shamanic Smudging Ritual (chapter 3). Ground and balance yourself, and take time to discuss the experience with your client.

One of my students expressed fear in using this technique since he felt using it to remove a headache might remove needed brain patterns or memories stored in the brain. Have no fear. Shamanic surgery works through intention and symbolism. It's not literally surgery. If you intend to remove the energy of a pain, the pain is all you will remove.

Psychic surgery involves a certain amount of play-acting, creativity, and patience. Be open to adapting the technique to suit your intuition and guidance. If you are connected with your spiritual allies and higher powers, you will be guided to do the right thing at the right time, always.

Spirit Extraction

Spirit extraction, also known as soul or entity removal, is an advanced form of psychic surgery and should only be attempted by those who have a great deal of experience with the other forms of shamanic healing and a strong, solid foundation between themselves and their spirit team. I include it because you, like me, might come upon this situation with no foreknowledge when doing what you thought would be more minor healing work.

When you remove an energetic block, you may find that it is a spirit attachment. Such spirit attachments form aspects of soul sickness and can be more serious in effect and more difficult to remove than a simple energy block. In essence, removing a spirit attachment is the same as removing an energy block. You use the same technique. The main difference is that this particular energy block has a personality, usually with an ego, and doesn't want to be removed. This ego self is in fear, and holds on tight to its parasitical existence because it fears what might happen next.

The attached spirit will not always go easily. The practitioner has to convince it to go, much like convincing a lost power animal or soul fragment to return. Otherwise, it must be commanded by your will to go. For the warrior-style shaman, this can feel like a battle. When you actively engage the client's aid, and your own allies, most spirit attachments will leave when commanded.

Ritually you can use your athame or a ritual sword passed over the area. The iron in the blade can disrupt spirit attachments.

Like all energy blocks, attached entities are not simply released, but neutralized. Such spirits are either guided by your own spirit allies to another plane, sent to the Underworld, or sent to the Upper World. Using imagery to create spirit gates to these worlds, or pillars of light to send them where they need to go, is a helpful technique. Mongolian shamans reportedly use reflective surfaces such as mirrors to absorb the spirit, and then point the mirror down to the ground, to send the spirit to the Underworld. Usually when you give a spirit the chance to release and be healed, it will eventually take it. Some forms of shamanism transform the attached entity into a new ally, giving it purpose, structure, and discipline in the overall team of spirits.

Although each situation is unique, there are some classic symptoms of potential spirit attachment. They are not the only symptoms, nor do they all, or even any of them, have to be present to indicate spirit attachment. In fact, such symptoms can be caused by a variety of other factors, so if you find yourself lethargic for a bit, don't rush out to your shaman claiming you have a spirit attachment.

- Feeling energetically drained for no obvious reason.
- Lack of concentration.
- The personality is drastically disrupted for no apparent reason, resulting in different, unusual, and harmful behavior.
- Sudden depression, mania, mood swings, compulsive behavior, verbal or physical abuse, violence, or suicidal tendencies for no apparent reason or with no previous history.
- Sudden addictive behaviors with no past history.
- Periods of blacking out, or seizures with no past history of seizures.
- Sudden serious illness with no known cause, and no conventional medical remedy is working.
- Severe arguments in the internal dialogue, beyond traditional neurosis, leading to disruption in life.
- Seeing violent or disturbingly graphic visions, occurring without warning.

If such attachments come in from past lives, you might not notice new symptoms. Though attachment will usually show up in diagnosis sessions, sometimes it will not. The attachment will become obvious when the client is spiritually ready to release the attached entity. Other healing work will have to be done to prepare the client before the detachment can be done.

The following is a range of spirit-attachment possibilities to understand.

Soul Intrusion

The spirit is not actually embedded in your energy, but it is hanging around you. It can interfere primarily with the body and mind. Sometimes it manifests as a sensation of being shadowed by a malevolent energy.

Soul Repression

This spirit is semi-attached, interfering with your energetic connection to the earth, sky, and Underworld realms. Sometimes called soul oppression, the spirit can suppress the natural energy level, giving a feeling of heaviness or weight and a sense of being tired, of losing energy, but this entity cannot control or influence your personality.

Obsession

Obsession spirit attachment is characterized by obsessive behavior and a desire to fulfill compulsions and addictions. Many addicts describe their addiction as a separate entity over which they seemingly have no power. The addict's illness conforms to the model of shamanic healing, yet most addicts are not aware of this.

Possession

Although popularized in movies, true possessions are not always as dramatic as they have been depicted. Possessions are rarer than most other spirit attachments, and can be identified because the spirit has a much stronger control for a longer period of time. Such experiences might be like an involuntary form of invocation. Soul shock can facilitate this type of attachment.

Soul Keeper

Soul keeper describes people who are either consciously or unconsciously so compassionate, yet lacking the most basic boundaries, that they take in suffering souls and soul fragments, and the soul gets stuck and attached in the

process. This type of attachment is usually indicative of those with mother/child issues. The soul-keeper individual is typically very psychically and empathetically strong, but needs to learn about shielding, grounding, and boundaries.

There are many sources of spirit attachment, including the following possibilities.

Soul Fragment

A soul fragment from another person in your life now, or from past lives, could seek out your soul for protection and safety. Though you only desire to provide comfort for your loved ones, this creates an imbalanced relationship, since you are unconsciously holding on to the energy of another.

Deceased

The soul of the deceased, or one of their subtle bodies, may be attached, like the soul fragment, seeking comfort from you.

Past-Life Love

A soul that is not incarnate, but is not fully anchored on the other side of the veil, can be attached to your soul. In this case, a soul from an intense relationship or love does not want to let go, and upon death attaches itself to the lover's soul, coming with the lover's next incarnation. This doesn't have to be an entire being, but can be a soul fragment of a past loved one. Such soul attachments manifest as destructive patterns in relationships, not wanting you to find love, happiness, or family with another.

Conjured Spirit

These are spirits conjured up and sent as an attack from other practitioners. Not only did the spirit attempt an attack, but either willingly or unwillingly the conjured spirit is now stuck.

Elemental

Elemental, faery, and nature spirits, both summoned spirits or those disrupted in nature, can become attached to your energy and cause problems, such as soul intrusion, soul repression, and obsession.

Use the shamanic-surgery techniques to remove such spirit attachments and

heal all involved in the situation. In particularly difficult circumstances, consult your wisest and strongest allies for advice on how to proceed.

For difficult spirits who are not necessarily attached but causing difficulties, the shamanic practitioner can call upon a protection spirit and create a charm/fetish/ ongon to give to a client, to form a bond of protection. You can make a simple protection charm by consecrating a piece of thread as a fetish, a focal point for an animal ally or spirit guardian, and tie that thread around the neck, wrist, or ankle of the person you want to protect. The spirit will continue to guard that person. When the thread breaks, the spirit of protection is no longer needed and may return back to its home.

Singing the Soul Back Home

When a child runs away from home in anger or fear, the parent can force the child to return, dragging the young one back with no communication and no guarantee that the situation won't occur again, or the parent can woo the child, taking time to reestablish a connection. The parent can communicate, and understand the fears and anger that created the situation. The parent can take responsibility for their role in the situation, yet not necessarily accept blame that is not justified. In the case of a young child, as I remember my own preschool self, hiding under the stairs and "running away" from everyone with my teddy bear and a peanut butter sandwich, the parent can engage the child, playing games and using rhymes and songs to reaffirm their connection and win back trust, to bring the child back into the fold.

Such songs to coax the child home have been used symbolically for the soul child, the lost part of our self that the shaman must retrieve. Known among many shamanic practitioners as "singing the soul back home," soul retrieval is a powerful yet subtle technique. Like a loved one coaxing a hurt child back into the fold, the shaman must do the same to the soul fragments that are lost. You can force this to happen through sheer will, but if you have not convinced that part of the soul to return willingly, it will leave you again at the first opportunity, just like a frightened child. You must sing it back home. Most do so figuratively, but you can use sacred songs and chants to do this literally. Like the Egyptian goddess Isis collecting the scattered parts of her dismembered husband/brother, Osiris, we search for the missing parts of our soul. Our inner

goddess image, our feminine nurturing side, is reconstituting our whole self after a trauma. Such woundings are often described in terms of the wounded inner child, and having to nurture the child back to health.

When the lost parts are returned, it is as if the entire soul rejoices. You become closer to whole. You are always whole, for you are connected to the entire universe and all is reflected in you, but soul retrieval allows you to become conscious of the parts of yourself from which you have disassociated during trauma, consciously or unconsciously. Soul retrieval is an opportunity to become more conscious of your entire self. You become more conscious of personal power and your purpose, your true will, in the world.

From my experience, almost everybody has some sort of soul loss to reclaim. Though similar effects can come by way of more conventional healing and therapies, usually there is another deeper soul level to heal. Healing is sometimes described like an onion: as we peel deeper and deeper, we get to the core. There are many layers to go through, and each can bring tears—tears of sadness and pain and tears of joy.

Some soul losses are from this life, and they are usually the ones first approached. Others can be from past lives, or even from experiences between incarnations. Many can feel deeply personal, while others seem very detached. After a few major soul retrievals, if they are necessary, a practitioner will have an opportunity for a more complete soul retrieval, one that is less personal, but spans across several times and places.

Though I've come across one tradition that focuses on soul retrieval in the Upper World, where your soul fragment is sheltered by the higher beings until you are ready for it, most traditions believe the soul fragments are not evolved and aware enough to enter the higher realms, so they hide in the Middle and Lower Worlds.

In the Middle World, soul fragments can remain in the ethers around the place of trauma that created the fragmentation. Though it's uncommon for the soul fragments to remain in the Middle World, it is possible. More likely they will attach to a person present at the time of the trauma, or they will travel to the soul of a trusted loved one for protection. The loved one can be from this life or another.

Most soul fragments go to the Underworld for rest, regeneration, and seclusion. Some, due to entering in a sense of fear, arrive in frightening lands

of the Underworld. Others find shelter and respite. They can remain fragmentary, or sometimes assume a persona and life of their own, creating an independent, albeit incomplete, existence. Many fragments, once found, will not want to go back. They must be healed with communication, persuasion, and love. You must welcome them back with open arms and take care of the issues that created their loss if you want to retain your soul health. You must make them a part of your soul family again. Tribal people sing about their family and tribe. Here is your singing. You must welcome your soul fragment back to your life's song.

Exercise 35

Soul Retrieval

Review past experiences from this life, or any others you might recall, that you considered traumatic. These are some of the points where you might have experienced soul loss. Know that many traumatic experiences can be suppressed by the mind, so the experiences you remember now might not be involved in your soul healing. Your journey might reveal repressed memories involving soul loss. You can do this review mentally or by writing them down—whichever you feel will be more productive.

Prepare for your journey in the usual way, creating sacred space, getting into your meditative state, and calling upon your higher self and spirit allies. Focus your attention on the intention of the journey. Speak with your primary animal ally. Ask your ally if you are ready to experience soul retrieval. If you are not, your animal ally will tell you and bring you to an alternate journey.

Travel with your guide, most likely to the Underworld. You may pick up a "trail" or "scent" from your soul fragment. I perceive it like a wispy trail, sometimes like smoke, and other times like a spider web. The trail leads me to the soul shard. Others just have a gut instinct. Go with your intuition and your ally's guidance.

When you find your soul fragment, you might find it personified as an aspect of you, from the past, or it may simply manifest as a fragment of glass or crystal. If you can communicate with it, do so. Understand why it left, and explain the changes you have made to your life to prevent that trauma from occurring again. Welcome it back. Imagine this piece of your soul reintegrating

with you. It can fit like a piece of a puzzle, or like liquid light pouring back into the glass that is your energy.

Most soul retrieval journeys focus on one fragment at a time, though practitioners have reported being guided to multiple fragments. Follow your ally's guidance.

When done, thank all those spirits involved. Acknowledge and thank your soul parts. Return to the Middle World. Return yourself to normal consciousness. Do the usual clearing, grounding, and closing rituals to return to normal life.

If you later become a shamanic practitioner and perform soul retrieval for another, you will follow a slightly different protocol. Start the journey by calling upon not only your allies, but also your client's higher self and spirit allies. Then lie down next to the recipient of healing, much like in a medicine retrieval journey. I usually place a special crystal, a quartz point that has been consecrated as my soul retrieval vessel, between us to act as the receptacle of the soul fragment, helping me maintain my boundaries in the situation. Usually I place it between our heads, or slightly above us, between the crowns.

Ask their allies if you have permission to do this work. If they respond affirmatively, continue. Let the allies guide you to the soul fragment, and communicate with it on behalf of the client. Compared to personal soul retrieval, you will find the process more detached and clear. Your shamanic journey self-image will be equipped with the image of your soul retrieval vessel, if you choose to use one. Its energy will correspond to the physical vessel. Use it to hold the soul part. If you don't use a vessel, hold the soul fragment within you, like a spirit medicine. Return to the Middle World, rise from trance, and blow the soul fragment back into the client. I normally hold my soul retrieval crystal between my mouth and the client, as if I was blowing through the crystal, blowing out the soul fragment into the body. Traditionally shamans blow the soul fragment into the heart or crown, or a combination thereof, depending on the tradition and their guidance. I usually blow into the heart first, come around to the crown, and then the heart again. I ask the spirit allies involved to help in the integration and healing of the client.

If you have a friend or study group working on this material with you, you can offer to do soul retrieval or other healing exercises for each other. It builds your experience for working with others, and helps you work through things that might be too intense to handle alone.

Alchemy of the Shadow

Healing the shadow is not a single ceremony or healing technique, but a lifelong commitment to harmony and integration. As you explore the various soul sicknesses and imbalances in the shamanic context, realize that an imbalanced relationship with your shadow is at the heart of many difficulties, and rectifying it can bring many other aspects into harmony.

As you journeyed on this yearly quest, you could have already been visited by your shadow. Repressed thoughts and feelings work their way into your consciousness through the prescribed exercises. Now you will conjure up the shadow with intention and ritual, to manifest at the culmination of your year-and-a-day journey.

For the end of this lesson and the next lesson, ideally for the next four to seven weeks in total, until you make your year-and-a-day goal, you will focus on distilling the shadow. Distilling the shadow is a ritualistic and psychological method of inducing a crisis that can result in a form of shamanic awareness and potential initiation.

This distillation ritual is intense, but will manifest your shadow into consciousness so you can develop a healthy relationship with it. Like the rites of alchemy, one must go through a putrefying or rotting experience, expressed as a dark night of the soul, to reach a new level of personal power. The decomposition is followed by cohabitation, the merging of two seeming opposites, such as your light and dark sides, into a new, stronger, healthier whole.

Your own pace may be faster or slower than outlined, but I suggest that you do not prolong the experience. In my workshop intensives, we do this exercise for seven weeks intensely. Twelve weeks is close to the limit of time I would personally do this exercise, to avoid being overwhelmed with the newly revealed emotions. I have found that four weeks of intense dedication to this experience is the minimum required.

In the final lesson of this book, you will culminate your distillation with a ritual journey to meet with and heal your shadow.

Exercise 36

Distilling the Shadow

For the next four to seven weeks, until you complete lesson 13, start a new journal. Keep it separate from your traditional journal or Book of Shadows, because it will be destroyed at the end of the ritual, not saved. If you are tempted to keep a piece of it, don't. The shadow is conjured up through the destruction of the pages. To keep it would nullify the benefits of the ritual.

In this new journal, divide the paper into four columns. You can do four columns to a single sheet, or two columns per sheet and use two sheets to make all four of your columns. In the four columns, make these four categories:

ANGER / FEAR / JEALOUSY / SHAME

Then write all the things you can think of in each column that have an emotional charge for you. Don't write about other people's angers, fears, jealousies, or shames. Write your own. The rule of thumb is that if it comes to mind, then it is unresolved, so write it down, no matter how long ago it happened. These are not detailed journal entries or narratives, but lists, much like creative brainstorming lists, but using your emotions as your foundation, not your intellectual ideas. You are not judging yourself, but simply acknowledging the things that come to mind, things from the past, present, and potential future that pop up when you do this exercise. Allow deeper memories to surface.

Ideally you will do this exercise every day. At a minimum you should do it three times a week. If you can only bear to do it once a week because it is too emotionally difficult for you, then start with once a week and see where it goes for you. Simply make a commitment to it and stick to it. If you miss one day you have committed to, try to make it up, or simply keep going. Make it a part of your regular meditations and altar devotionals (*OTOW,* chapter 9). If you have to suspend other journal writing or dream journals to get through this, then do it. Nothing is more important than this exercise.

You may find that many things will be in multiple columns, because you might be ashamed of your jealousy or angry about your fears. That's fine. Write down whatever comes to mind in each column. If the categories don't suit you, redefine them. You can add to them, but if you decide to take away a category, perhaps you should simply rename it. If you take it away entirely,

you might be hiding from one of your biggest issues. One way my students have renamed them is like this:

ANGER / FEAR / RESENTMENT / GUILT

Those categories are close. Some people have added pride, desire, and even self-loathing. Do what your allies guide you to do, but don't distill the shadow with more than five categories. If you feel compelled to do it with more, you should think about any masochistic tendencies you may have in terms of spiritual evolution.

Each time you do it, NEVER look back at the previous lists. Don't try to remember or re-create the previous lists. Let your thoughts flow without much linear, logical thought. Go on impulse and feeling. It might be difficult to start, but once you open the floodgates, it will all come out. Over time you will notice that certain categories will be shorter or longer over time. The groupings will fluctuate. This is normal. If your categories remain consistent, and, say, anger is always your longest list, that's fine and normal for you too. There is no one way to do it. We are all unique.

Along with the prescribed exercises, you can repeat any of the healing techniques and exercises as needed to help you through this intense period. In fact you are encouraged to use your intuition and allies and to work with the techniques that suit your individual situation. Use the skills you have learned. Exercise 3: Emotional Body Training and Exercise 9: Eating Heavy Energy will be particularly helpful. Again, do not forget to seek out healing facilitation from others or support from family, friends, and community when needed. This is an initiation, a test of strength and courage, but you do not walk alone. All your allies, in all worlds, walk with you.

If you start this process and determine that you are not going to continue with it, please skip ahead to the last lesson, to the section "Stopping Shadow Work Before Your Year and a Day Is Complete." If you haven't done any of the preparation work from the first two books in the Temple of Witchcraft series, or have had no equivalent experiences in meditation, personal development, or ritual work, you might want to gain greater mastery of those skills before tackling shadow work deeply. You can continue to work with shamanic techniques and build your relationship with your spirit allies. They will

help prepare you, and help you with your future decisions regarding shadow work.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 32–36 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.
- Before you complete this course, journey to your most trusted guides and ask if you are in need of soul healing at this time. If so, and they inform you that it is wise to undertake a personal soul healing journey at this time, then do so. If they advise you to get outside facilitation, seek out another healer. The most common form of self soul healing is soul retrieval of a soul fragment, outlined in Exercise 35. If your guides tell you it is not time to perform a soul healing, skip exercise 35 for now.

Tips

- Review the shadow material in chapter 4 to understand better what you are evoking and preparing to heal.
- Review your shadow promise from exercise 4.
- Do exercises with shadows, paying attention to real shadows. Play with shadow and candlelight, or shadow and streetlight, and see if it gives you a greater appreciation of the shadow self.
- Give warning to your spouse, family, and friends that you are performing a deep soul healing through distilling the shadow and that entering this state could bring up difficult feelings. My students jokingly ask me to send a note home with them explaining the process so their loved ones will not worry and will understand their mood swings and strange behavior.
- If you feel overwhelmed with shadow work, be gentle with yourself. One trick my students have come up with is to treat themselves to something fun and pleasant once they have completed their distilling-the-shadow journaling. Some alternate with “happy” lists of things for which they are grateful or joyous. Water is about love and joy as well as shadow and reflection. Water is also about relationship with yourself, and setting boundaries in relationship with yourself. Don’t overwhelm yourself even when you strive to push your limits. Only you know what you are truly

capable of. Let your inner voice guide you.

• Seek out body workers, energy healers, and vibrational medicines, as well as talk therapies, if needed. Complementary techniques, such as massage, Reiki, polarity therapy, therapeutic touch, acupuncture, herbalism, flower essences, crystal healing, martial arts, and yoga, can help us release emotional energy trapped in our physical body that we might not even be consciously aware of during the process of distilling the shadow.

• If you have access to black-eyed Susan or blackberry flower essence, or obsidian gem elixir, start taking it. I suggest preparing a dosage bottle. Place one to five drops of any of these essences or combinations of these essences, at stock level, into a dosage bottle, and take three drops, three times a day, or whenever difficult feelings arise. They will help the shadow distillation. If they are not available, you can do a plant spirit medicine retrieval for their healing energy.

Recommended Reading

• *Singing the Soul Back Home* by Caitlín Matthews.

[contents]

16

Lesson Twelve
Mastering the Three Worlds

The shamanic witch seeks to master vertical consciousness, living with awareness in all three realities. Our history, myths, and traditions connect us to the realms of heaven, earth, and Underworld. By mastering our awareness and ability to travel in each realm, we reconnect with the parts of ourselves residing in those realms, reweaving the divine current, the vertical line of communication that allows us to manifest our magickal will.

Mastering the Middle World

As you begin your walk in shadow, take the time to walk the paths of the Middle World again. Understand them better. Feel every step on the second roads. Learn the mysteries of the land all around you. Build a better relationship with the elements, nature, the gods of the land, and the Earth Mother herself.

The Four Elemental Pillars of the World

The elements are the four powers of creation, reflected in many ways, in many realms. In the Middle World, they are the pillars that collectively create our known reality. Traditional witches and magicians learn how to summon and work with the powers of the four elements to affect the physical Middle World through spellcraft. Once a sacred circle is cast, as a temple between the worlds, gateways to each of the four realms are opened, allowing the elemental powers to come through and guard the circle boundary and aid in spell work. The beings that regulate and animate the four energies, known as elementals, are often considered to be beneath the notice of the caster. Many practitioners command and order these beings about, and just assume they will be a part of the ritual because it is the traditional way of casting a sacred

space.

To the shamanic witch, the relationship with the elementals and their realms is very important. Your relationship with the elements within you is reflected in your magick and journey. Through journey work, spells, and meditation, you can create stronger relationships with these spirits, and thereby transform your inner relationship. The consciousness of each elemental spirit is somewhat limited. They are fueled primarily by their own nature, so they can only offer aid in their realm of expertise. So don't ask for practical advice from a fire elemental, and don't ask for love advice from an earth elemental. If you work with each elemental in its realm of expertise, you can receive many blessings and learn how to integrate the elemental energy more fully into your life.

The path of the witch asks us to constantly reevaluate and improve our inner and outer relationships with the elements. As you continue onward in your studies, you will be faced with challenges to show a greater mastery of the elements. At this point in the journey, we are seeking to understand what areas are unbalanced, and take steps to bring them more into balance.

The process of balancing these forces is known as balancing the shields, or the medicine wheel teaching, in some Native American lore. Each of the four directions of the medicine wheel is linked with different animals and spirits. In this journey of shamanic witchcraft, we have assigned animals, plants, stones, spirits, and deities to the four elemental points of our wheel.

City	*Direction*	*Tool*	*Master*	*Deity*
Falias	North	Stone	Morfessa	Eriu
Gorias	East	Spear	Esras	Lugh
Finias	South	Sword	Uscias	Nuada
Murias	West	Cauldron	Semias	Dagda

Figure 36: *Celtic Cities*

Celtic shamanic practitioners look to the four cities of the Tuatha de Danaan, symbolically linked with the four elements, as part of balancing meditations and rituals. More modern lore has given us a fifth "city" for the Tuatha de Danaan. From Fiona Macleod, the faery lover of William Sharp, we have the Glen of Precious Stones, corresponding to the element of spirit, and the center point.

In these Celtic traditions, the gateways to the four cities are visualized at the

four cardinal points of the sacred space. Each one is acknowledged or saluted before doing other work. Journeys to balance the elements can occur by moving through the gateways, much like going to the elemental realms in *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft* (Exercises 13, 17, 21, and 25). I look at the four great cities as pinnacles of the elemental realms, where greater mastery over each of the four spheres can be learned.

Like all Western magickal associations, the directions, and their elements and tools, vary from source to source, so feel free to adapt the correspondences based on your intuition and, most importantly, your own experience. For more detailed information on the qualities and correspondences with each of the elements, review chapters 6, 7, and 8 in *The Outer Temple of Witchcraft.*

Exercise 37

Elemental Journey

Journey to the four elemental realms to find balance and healing. You can do this exercise in four short journeys, or one longer journey where you visit all four realms. Prepare for your journey in the usual way, creating sacred space, getting into your meditative state, and calling upon your allies. Hold your intention to visit one or more of the elemental realms. You can start your journey in your inner temple, going through a specific gateway for each element, or you can start at the base of the World Tree, and let any appropriate animal guide take you to the realm.

While in the elemental realm, ask to work with the elemental spirit that is appropriate for you. Speak to this spirit about your life in relationship to the element. For earth, talk about practical matters, such as finance and health. For fire, talk about matters of passion, identity, and drive. For air, discuss the mental realm, the world of ideas, thoughts, and communication. For water, discuss relationships, love, and family. Listen to the elemental spirit as it reveals its wisdom to you.

When done, ask to exchange energy with the elemental. Ask to exchange your dense elemental energy with the elemental's purer, more refined energy. Feel your elemental energy flow out into the elemental spirit, and feel its energy flow into you, in a healthy, balanced way. You will know when the

exchange is done. Then thank the elemental spirit, and return to the World Tree/inner temple. Either continue on to the next element or return to normal consciousness, doing the usual clearing, grounding, and closing rituals.

Sendings along the Hidden Roads

What some call lower-plane astral travel or remote viewing, a shamanic witch calls traveling the hidden roads of the Middle World. These roads move through the land, across space, and backwards and forwards through time. These paths in the Middle World are used to gather information, send messages, meet with others, celebrate, protect, and, most importantly, heal. The Benandanti, astrally flying in their night battles, traveled along these second roads. Anybody who connects with distant lands uses the paths of the Middle World.

The witch's animal totem uses the Middle World roads to aid in magick and healing through a process known as sending. A witch sends a primary animal spirit ally to another location. The animal spirit can bring healing energies and spirit medicine to another who is not physically present with us (see chapters 12 and 13). They can act as our eyes and ears to check out a location, much like remote viewing, yet they return to us and give us the information later, either through merging their impressions with us, or simply by telling us whatever we need to know when we communicate with them during meditation or journey. Energetically they can prepare a space for us, arriving at a place before we arrive, particularly where we do teaching or healing work.

Sendings are particularly helpful when you are otherwise physically occupied. Odin of Norse myth sends out his two ravens to investigate the nine worlds. Sending is a great way of integrating a magickal view into your daily life, knowing your guides can help you when you are at work, school, or otherwise committed.

It's important to realize that sending occurs with mutual respect. Our allies are conscious and independent. They are not constructs or thoughtforms to be completely programmed by our will. Practitioners of certain forms of ceremonial magick can create a magickal construct to perform these tasks, but in the case of the shamanic witch, we are partnering with a spirit ally.

Our animal spirits will occasionally perform a sending independent of our

conscious knowledge. Our allies can scout ahead on our path without our knowledge, warning us of upcoming danger. This is one of the experiences that helped "prove" to me that our guides have an independent existence, and are doing things, in their world and ours, when we are focused on other events. It truly is a partnership. Many psychically sensitive people report seeing and feeling particular spirits days before a practitioner arrives. I've had several people notice the energy of Crow or Spider before I appear for a lecture, not knowing these are totems of mine. Other teachers I know have had people see their very peculiar spirit guides prior to class. Other times, friends, family, and covenmates will be able to feel the presence of your spirit allies with them, even if you are not physically present. Through their messages, you will know intuitively who needs your attention.

Exercise 38

Sending

Perform a journey with a primary totem or ally, and communicate about the process of sending. Each shamanic witch will have a different way of doing this. The process is between you and your allies. Usually I get into a light trance state and simply ask one of my allies to go to a specific place, and observe and report back to me, or perform a specific action. Other practitioners have rituals, symbols, or signals that their totems require. Sometimes it involves taking the totem's fetish out of your witch bag and using it ritualistically. It can be as simple as taking the fetish out and keeping it on your altar while the sending is occurring. If your animal spirit does not travel easily or quickly in the physical world, such as a turtle, then visualizing it with wings or passing through an astral portal (thereby shortening the distance the spirit must travel between two points in the Middle World) are great alternatives.

Explore your spirit relationships, and learn how to do a sending with your allies' help and your own intuition. You can use the sending technique to help develop your relationship with your animal spirit ally. As you become more proficient, you will develop creative personal uses for the sending technique. Such allies can help with all rituals and healing, charms, potions, dream work, mental communication, artistic inspiration, divination, and protection magick for

your home and loved ones.

When doing distance healings, shamanic witches can send either their own spirit self out to the recipient, or send their own familiar totem as a messenger. The process, including obtaining permission, is much the same as with in-person healing, but the ability to walk the middle roads allows the witch to work with those who are not physically present.

Exercise 39

Distant Spirit Medicine Retrieval

In this exercise, you seek out healing spiritual medicine for someone who is not present in the physical world with you. Distance separates you. Except for this fact, this is the same as Exercise 25: Animal Spirit Medicine Retrieval Journey (chapter 12) or Exercise 28: Stone Spirit Medicine Retrieval Journey (chapter 13), when performed for another. You should review these exercises if they are not intimately familiar to you. Make sure your recipient is open to this healing, and ask permission directly if possible. If you do not have a person who is in need of healing, your allies could guide you to use this technique on a particular piece of land. Follow your intuition.

Before you return to normal consciousness and bring your awareness back to the present place and time, as you traditionally would when doing healing work in person, you will send your recipient the medicine. You have three options when working over the hidden roads of the Middle World.

1. Send a trusted animal familiar to the recipient. First transfer the spirit medicine you have gathered from your self-image to that of your animal ally. Hold the image of your recipient in mind, and direct the animal familiar to give them the spirit healing medicine for the highest good, harming none, and return with its impressions or any messages. Some practitioners will wait at the base of the World Tree for their quick-moving familiar to report back. Others will return and let the animal spirit do its job, reporting back during the next meditation, journey, or dream.

2. Evoke the personal energy and higher self of the recipient to your inner temple. Go to your inner temple, and call the spirit of your recipient. Instead of evoking your recipient's higher self in person, or in a ritual circle,

do it in your mind's eye, in the inner temple. Review Exercise 17: Higher Self Connection (chapter 8) and its adaptations for more information. There in your magickal workspace, you can give the recipient the healing medicine, imagining that you are both physically present together. Complete the ritual by blowing into the necessary points on the body, just as you would if you were physically present. The healing is completed, and the higher self and personal energy of the recipient is released. The practitioner returns to normal waking consciousness.

3. Directly send the medicine to the recipient yourself. Return to the Middle World while still in your altered state. At the base of the World Tree, think about the person to whom you are sending this medicine. Walk around the tree. From which direction do you feel this person? Then journey—feeling yourself fly, astrally swim, or even burrow through the land to get to the recipient of your healing. When you reach your target, you might see them quite literally wherever they are in the physical world, or have a symbolic, idealized image of them on a higher level. Just as if you were present physically, or in your inner temple, complete the healing ritual. When done, return to normal waking consciousness, and close with any necessary grounding or rituals.

You can adapt this technique for other more traditional forms of astral travel, remote viewing, and personal sendings, using the World Tree and shamanic journey as your foundation. Soul retrieval is usually done in person. I don't suggest using your animal familiar to send soul fragments or to do soul retrieval via the Middle World paths at a distance unless you absolutely have to. These techniques can simply be too intense, and the feelings they bring up during integration usually require you to have someone present to provide comfort and physical support.

Mastering the Upper World

Before delving back into the chthonic lower realm, walk the starry roads of the Overworld. Though you may have a preference for one world over the others, it is good to be versed in all of them to be a true walker between the worlds. The upper realm can give you a break from intense shadow work and help uplift you, seeing a different side of life.

Celestial Origins

One of the important aspects of the heavenly realms is that they are a source of light. From the generating sun, reflective moon, and shining stars, magick is traditionally equated with light. Our term of spiritual advancement, enlightenment, means "filled with light."

Many traditions, from shamans to magicians, believe we originate in the heavenly cosmos. Some mystics look to specific stars as "home," the place of their inner light's origin. It is their soul's home. South American shamans stare at the sky, believing that finding "their" star is an important part of spiritual training. Much like zodiac birth signs correspond with special qualities and challenges in your life, coming from a particular star grants a range of traits, aptitudes, and challenges. Some New Age witches believe that all witches on this planet come from a particular star, though not everybody agrees about which star. Medieval Christian scholars associated witchcraft with certain stars, and those stars were considered to be "evil" or malefic by these Christian stargazers. I personally have an affinity to the Pleiades, but know many witches with a connection to the stars of Sirius, Orion, Scorpio, and a host of others.

Various native tribes look to the star ancestors and spirit nations that rest beyond the stars. New Age mythos reflects the same ideas, though many people find it hard to understand the parallels. Those in the Native American traditions might refer to celestial spirits as the "star nations." Modern New Age traditions think of the star nations as extraterrestrials. Some even believe that their own souls are reincarnating extraterrestrial spirits. The idea seems crazy when viewed through the modern lens, but it really parallels some ancient ideas and teachings.

The concept of celestial origin is also found in the traditions of witchcraft and ceremonial magick. Witches would look to the tales of the Watchers, Nephilim, or Grigori for some similar concepts of stellar beings visiting, and even mating with, those on the earthly plane. The novels of Dion Fortune impart her mystical insights through fiction, and in her book *The Sea Priestess,* the hero, Wilfred Maxwell, undergoes experiences with the moon and his priestess, Vivien Le Fay Morgan, that allow him to "trace my lineage to the stars." Even the infamous Aleister Crowley, channeling the Egyptian star goddess Nuit in *The Book of the Law,* says: "Every man and every woman is a star . . . Come forth,

O children, under the stars & take your fill of love!”

Partaking in the mysteries of the Upper World and starry realms gets you in touch with your starry essence. Such journeys can balance our work in the shadows. Only by learning to hold the light can we be the torchbearers to bring it to the dark lands.

Exercise 40

Cosmic River and Witch Star Journey

Prepare for your journey in the usual way, creating sacred space, getting into your meditative state, and calling upon your allies. When you come to the World Tree, hold your intention to visit the Upper World. An Upper World guide may appear, or you may need to journey there yourself. Your destination is the great Upper World cosmic river. Related to the Milky Way, the spiritual analogue is the life-nourishing river of the heavens, that winds through all the worlds.

When you find the stellar currents, flow with them. You might find yourself flying alongside the cosmic river, riding within it, or merging with it. Feel the stars around you and the stars within you. Allow yourself to float in the celestial currents, and invite the experience to inform you.

See if you can journey to your own special star. What does it look like? What colors dominate your senses? Do you know its name? How does it feel?

Allow the winding of the river to guide you back to the Middle World. You could even find yourself in the Underworld, with the starry river feeding the roots of the great World Tree. Use your abilities to return to the Middle World when done. Return to normal waking consciousness, doing the usual clearing, grounding, and closing rituals.

Gessa, Vows, and Promises

Beings from all the realms can ask you for a promise or vow. Our medicine allies will require us to use their powers justly. Sickness spirits will make deals, agreements to bring healing, as long as the recipient is a part of the healing process. But it has been my experience, through my own exploration and those of my students, that those spirits attuned to the Upper World are most likely to

require a vow or commitment of personal sacrifice or restriction for your highest good.

A geis ("gesh") is a divine prohibition or requirement set by the gods (the plural of geis is gessa, pronounced "gess-uh"). Gessa technically come from the Celtic traditions. A Celtic hero or seer is required by the gods and spirits to do or not do something specific, upon pain of losing his magickal abilities. Many look at gessa as curses.

In the mythic stories, the geis is typically the hero's undoing. The Irish hero Cuchulain had two gessa. One required him to always accept the hospitality of others. The second prohibited him from ever eating the flesh of his namesake, the dog or hound. When he was offered dog meat to eat, the seeds of his destruction were sown.

Thankfully I know of no modern Celtic shaman with a similar set of gessa. Such is the stuff of legends, but our own reality can be quite different and more down-to-earth. In the living shamanic traditions, spirit allies sometimes have requirements to further develop your relationship with them. Usually the requirement is for your highest good. Modifications of behavior in caring for the body, mind, emotions, and soul help alter your energy and facilitate contact with the other powers. Restrictions in diet or sexual activity and breaking addictions are common. If you agree to such restrictions, then your word is your bond, and you are held to them until your spirit ally releases you.

A friend of mine with great shamanic gifts was told by his spirit allies that he needed to stop smoking marijuana. After being addicted to the plant for many years without the ability to moderate his consumption, it interfered with his ability to progress further spiritually and emotionally. They told him that there is nothing inherently wrong morally, ethically, or spiritually with using marijuana, and it can be a potent magickal ally under certain circumstances, but his addiction was interfering with his magickal clarity and his personal life. His use of the plant stunted his emotional growth and ability to process feelings and relationships. It was solely an escape, not a recreation. After failed attempts to moderate his consumption, his allies asked him to quit completely to progress further in his magickal studies. He agreed and was able to quit cold turkey. He then blossomed spiritually and emotionally. Today he is an amazing healer and shaman.

Do not necessarily seek out a geis. Having one doesn't mean you are more

or less spiritually advanced than somebody who doesn't have one. If it is right for you, your spiritual allies will make it clear, or will have another practitioner bring it to your attention. In the end, it is your decision to accept the restriction, and the benefits from it, or reject it, and face the consequences of your decision.

Mastering the Lower World

The mysteries of the Underworld are intimately tied to the mysteries of the witch. Like the goddesses of the witch, we are torchbearers to the Underworld. We are explorers of the unknown. We bring light, awareness, to the dark. We are not afraid of the dark and the mysteries it holds. Like turning over a rock or looking under the bed, what our imagination conjures up is usually more fearsome than what actually lies beneath. By facing the unknown shadows within ourselves, we are better prepared to help others face the fears of the dark and not only survive, but thrive, once touched with the mysteries of death. Truly such initiations into the arts of the craft occur in the Underworld, where we learn the art of creating change in the world around us and, more importantly, in the world within us.

The Underworld Cauldron

To prepare for your shadow initiation, visit the Underworld with the intention of receiving a healing from a cauldron in the Underworld. Seek out the patron deities associated with the cauldron—the horned one, the Crone, the giants, etc. The deity might grant you a drink of the healing waters, or submerge you for a deeper transformation. The experience will be what you need most, not necessarily what you want.

I suggest a journey to a cauldron of healing to remove any unwanted, unhealthy spirit attachments, entities, and soul fragments from others that are ready to go. Entity extraction by yourself can be difficult, but in the context of a healing cauldron, you can more easily release unwanted energies. This healing will create the space within you for deeper healing with the subsequent soul retrieval journey.

Exercise 41

Healing Chamber to Release Unhealthy Spirit Attachments

Prepare for your journey in the usual way, creating sacred space, getting into your meditative state, and calling upon your allies. Think about the mythic pantheon you have studied. Is there a figure associated with cauldrons, caves, or regeneration? It might even be a figure from a previous journey, giving you the opportunity to work more deeply in partnership. Keep your intention in mind as you do this. When you reach the World Tree, hold the intention to journey to the Underworld for healing. Say:

> *I ask to journey to the healing cauldrons of the Lower World to experience healing for my highest good, with ease, grace, and gentleness. I ask to release all unwanted spirit attachments and unhealthy entities. So mote it be.*

Wait for your animal ally or other spirit guide to lead you to the Underworld and help you find a special place of healing. Follow your guide and intuition. If a deity stands in charge of the cauldron, petition this being with your request. The deity may have other plans for you, however. From this point you will be guided to the most perfect experience for you.

When done, thank all those involved. Return to the Middle World. Return yourself to normal waking consciousness. Do the usual clearing, grounding, and closing rituals to return to normal life.

Remember that your cauldron might not be a cauldron at all, but a well, spring, river, or ocean. Don't be attached to the form in which it manifests—look to the experience to inform you. You might not even journey to the cauldron, but have a different journey altogether. If the journey to a healing cauldron doesn't work for you, experiment with the technique of evoking your healing team in a healing chamber or energy field in the material world (exercise 33).

Cauldron imagery can also reemerge in your shadow work in the last lessons, and in deeper initiations into shamanic traditions, where you experience your spirit form's death and rebirth in the cauldron of death and life.

The Dark Goddess and God

One of the most familiar myths of Wiccan lore is the story of the Goddess'

descent into the Underworld. Many versions of this story exist, for the theme is universal. The tales of the descent of the Goddess are told in Wheel of the Year celebrations, self-dedication rituals, and initiation rituals in many traditions. We hear tales of the maiden Kore descending to be reborn as the Underworld Queen Persephone through her trial with Lord Hades, king of the lower realms. The story of Persephone has many forms, from a romantic wooing by the dark god to a violent kidnapping and rape. Though primarily told as a story of the seasons, the descent of Persephone is a story of growing up and acknowledging the darkness, the shadow, the other side of life that children often do not see, but adults must face. With this knowledge and new role, Persephone is known as “She who must be feared” or “She who destroys the light,” at least for half of the year, when she rules the Underworld.

Less well-known, but perhaps one of the oldest mythic truths in human history, is the story of Inanna, the Sumerian queen of heaven and earth. She too descends into the Underworld to face her dark reflection, her sister Erishkigal. After many trials at the gateways of the Underworld, where she relinquishes her symbols of her power, her attachments to her worldly life and role, she dies in the court of her dark sister and is reborn. Through previous planning and the ability to surrender to a higher power, she returns to the Upper Worlds with the knowledge of the mysteries of death. She claims power over all three realms, not just the stellar and earthly ones.

The Goddess is not the only one in descent. We have similar stories, with some slightly different themes, in the myths pertaining to the gods. The story of the double murder of the Egyptian Osiris by his brother Set, and his resurrections by his sorceress wife/sister Isis, is rife with the mysteries of death and rebirth. Upon his last resurrection, Osiris becomes the lord of the dead. The solar/agricultural theme of the slain or sacrificed god can be found in the stories of Dionysus, Bacchus, Adonis, Tammuz, Dumuzi, Balder, more modern interpretations of the Celtic god Lugh, the Oak and Holly Kings, as well as the New World Aztec deity Xochilpilli. You can also see the theme in Christianity, the stories of King Arthur, and even the death of John F. Kennedy.

The gods themselves give us templates for the sacred journey, the archetypal patterns of shadow work. Through their descent, death, and resurrection, we find parallels in our own journey. Though literally not as visceral as the myths of old, psychically the events of true introspection and

healing the shadow can be quite powerfully confrontational. Study of the Underworld gods and their journey to self-discovery and empowerment, no matter how difficult, gives us greater understanding of and appreciation for the road before us.

Exercise 42

Journey to the Dark Goddess/God

In your final Underworld journey before your shadow initiation, you will seek out the dark goddess or dark god of the Underworld. Although for some people meeting the dark ones can be terrifying, the encounter is cleansing. Like the Underworld itself, the dark queen and king have the gift to absorb all that doesn't serve our highest good, renewing and recycling our energy with their power of change. In Celtic myth, the hero Cuchulain meets the washerwoman at the ford. The woman is an aspect of the Morrighan, and this vision portends his death because he broke his geis. The dark goddess is not the murderer, but the one who washes the blood, his past, from his clothing in the purifying river water. When we voluntarily seek out the dark goddess or god, our past can be cleansed and washed away. Our issues can come into finer focus, and our path be made clear. We need not literally die to be reborn.

Many students report a lifting of their shadow work after an encounter with the dark goddess or god. The Underworld rulers allow you to release any unnecessary baggage and direct your attention to the most important shadow issues remaining. Underworld experiences are truly blessings.

New Assignments

- Do exercises 37–42 and record your experiences in your Book of Shadows.
- If you feel the need, you can perform a spirit medicine retrieval (exercises 25, 27, or 28) for yourself. It can manifest a new ally, or deepen a relationship with a more familiar spirit medicine. As you develop on your path, you can travel for spirit medicine whenever you would like, to help you initiate, integrate and stabilize healing changes. If you feel too close to the situation, and have a friend or trusted fellow practitioner who is versed in spirit medicine, you can ask this person to do a spirit medicine retrieval for

you, either in person or from a distance.

Continuing Assignments

- Diligently continue Exercise 36: Distilling the Shadow.

Tips

- Review lessons 2, 3, and 4.
- If you are afraid to journey to the Dark Goddess in the Underworld for exercise 42, you can go to your inner temple, open the gateway of transformation (*ITOW,* chapter 14), and ask to meet with her in the gateway.

Recommended Reading

- *The Wiccan Mysteries* by Raven Grimassi.
- *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth* by Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer.

[contents]

17

Lesson Thirteen
Shadow Initiation

Every light casts a shadow. Each of us casts a shadow. We cannot exist in this world without it. Everything in the material, physical world casts a shadow. When we live in the material world, we, too, cast a shadow, both literally and spiritually. It's part of the pact we make when our soul agrees to take form in the world. Though many look to the shadow itself as something evil, it is not, no more than the shadow of a tree is evil. At times we relax in its shade. The shadow is a needed part of nature. A tree could not exist in full noonday sun twenty-four hours a day. It needs the darkness and the night to rest and rejuvenate.

The shadow itself is not evil or harmful, but what can cause harm is our relationship to the shadow. The shadow consists of what is not seen, what is hidden and repressed. If a light is never shown, things grow cold and dark. A tree's shadow moves with the sun. If shadow always encompassed one part of the land, that part would not grow. There must be change and renewal, and that only occurs when one is conscious of the shadow.

People get caught up in the polarity of light and dark, equating it with good and bad, right and wrong. They look to the light and dark as absolutes, but witches know there are no absolutes. There are cycles and seasons as everything changes. There are rhythms and patterns. People stuck in this harmful polarity consciousness are like computers, functioning in zeros and ones, on/off, not knowing the richness of other patterns and systems. Light and dark are not engaged in a bitter battle where only one will survive, as many popular movies, shows, and even religions would have you believe. Do you see a war in the sky as day turns to night and turns back to day again? I don't. I see beautiful sunsets and sunrises, an interplay of light and dark. They are complements, just like male and female are complements, Goddess and God. They are not in a battle to wipe out the other.

The dark of the shadow can be fearsome because it is unknown. We are forced to make contact with it because sometimes it demands our attention in some frightening ways, desperate to make contact. At times it can be raging, but when we look closely, it's more like a raging child than a fearsome monster. With our attention, love, and genuine empathy, we can transform it.

Partnership, not eradication, is the key. A transcended awareness that is beyond the light and the dark, yet encompasses them, is needed. By accepting the shadow, you accept the parts of yourself that are the hardest to swallow. You learn to accept such emotions as fear, anger, jealousy, and shame. You do not reject them, but also do not let them rise up unknowingly and rule you like a mob. Through this acceptance, you accept these truths in others, and have a great compassion for humanity and the human condition.

When your spirituality denies the shadow, you lose your sense of humanity and your connection to the world community. Spiritual leaders are often volatile people, but they know the appropriate use of such energies and are not attached to them. For my Christian counterparts, I tell them to look to Jesus overturning the moneylenders' tables in the temple. For those in the East, look at the protests of Gandhi. Neither man was corrupted by his emotions. They felt deeply, yet could remain unattached. They could be guided by higher will, not solely by personal desire. The emotions were tools to move forward in their missions. Pagan mythology is filled with angry destroyer goddesses who are using the energy in an appropriate fashion, yet they are not vessels of evil or corruption. As goddesses they fulfill a higher will, to destroy so that something new can be created.

If you make the shadow an ally, you have a great source of healing and strength. Connected with the lower self and lower realms, you have greater powers of intuition, psychic ability, and magick. Aligning the shadow with your highest good in a conscious manner, rather than being unconscious and unaware of it, gives the shadow proper channels to work and manifest. Any coming problems arising in the shadow are more easily recognized and caught early on, before they manifest as great difficulties.

Initiation

To the traditional witch, the word initiation conjures up images of traditional

rituals and rites of initiation, where one witch elevates another to a higher degree, a higher status hopefully reflecting their level of awareness, knowledge, and power. Though such experiences are very powerful, they differ from the shaman's initiation. Formal and structured Wiccan initiation rituals are a way to re-create key components of the shamanic initiation of death and Underworld resurrection. They are powerful in their own right, but different from the shaman's journey to the otherworlds to receive initiation directly from the spirits.

Shamanic initiations are more akin to what I feel is one of the most important aspects of initiation—a transformative experience. Although some shamans go through ritualistic initiations not unlike those in the formal traditions of Wicca, most have an inner experience of initiation directly from the spirits. Some undergo initiation as the first real step of training, while for others it is a culmination of a period of learning.

Many shamans feel they are chosen or called by the spirits directly, and learn their arts from the spirits. A traumatic experience can induce the contact. Some might simply start seeing and conversing with spirits. The experience is facilitated with a vision quest–like ritual. Shamanism is sometimes connected with madness, as potential shamans go wild and mad, living apart from the tribe. If they learn to listen to the spirits, they gain the survival skills they need and the magickal skills to heal and help others, returning as a shaman. Those in traditional Western society, rather than tribal society, are most apt to think the spirit worker is completely crazy. In either case, spontaneous spirit contact can be quite jarring to one's worldview, and can initiate one into a new world of mysteries and learning.

Other traumas that can induce shamanic contact include illness or accident. When a potential shaman is close to the spirit world because her body is failing, she can make contact with spirits more easily. Infections, blood loss, and even lightning strikes are potential triggers. Some shamans believe a lightning strike or multiple strikes are needed to empower a shaman. Is this literal lightning, or the bolt of enlightenment that comes with awakening? It is interesting to note that in the modern folk tale of the Japanese healing tradition of Reiki, the founder, Dr. Usui, was said to have been struck by lightning while on his own meditative quest.

Illnesses with extended comas are prime shamanic-initiation arenas. To heal

the illness, the potential shaman must interact with the spirit world and learn its medicine. Upon healing, the shaman returns with greater understanding, awareness, and power. People who have had a near-death experience, or NDE, have similar awakenings, learning to not fear death and finding a new place in their "tribe" with a sense of peace and wonder, yet they seem to lack the magickal training a shaman initiate would get from the spirits.

Shamanic initiation is much like the Chöd rituals of Tibet, where the practitioner summons a goddess to behead and dismember him, making a stew of his body for the spirits, gods, and demons to feast on. Like the shamanic initiate, the practitioner of Chöd realizes that consciousness survives after the destruction of the body's self-image, and the path to true liberation is begun.

Shadow initiation, although shamanic, doesn't have to be as gruesome or life threatening as a near-death experience, at least not on the physical plane. In these last lessons, as you distill the shadow of your soul, you are coming to understand what the shadow means for you and your life. Shadow initiation is facing that shadow. It is a potential test, a trial. Some traditions call the experience confronting the Dweller on the Threshold, the spirit that prevents us from going forward in our magickal quests. While many magickal practitioners see such dwellers as a specific and separate spiritual entity, in essence they serve as a safeguard. Most people think of such blocks as unfairly preventing them from progressing toward their full spiritual power and enlightenment, but in truth it prevents them from claiming too much power before they have dealt with their unresolved issues—their fears, anger, and ego self. If this self were to have access to greater power, it would be very destructive. Such issues can rear their heads again anytime on the path, but the initial facing of the shadow makes you aware of things of which you might not otherwise be aware. In truth, it's a wonderful opportunity to honestly know where you are on your spiritual path and what you should be working on next. At its deepest level, this initiation into shadow is a chance for rebirth. Like a snake, you shed your old skin and are reborn into the new.

Preparing for Shadow Initiation

There are many things you can do to prepare for shadow initiation. Thankfully

you have been doing them all for the last year. Learning healing techniques forces you to look at your own healing and take stock of your life and its unresolved situations. Distilling the shadow, and the previous two lessons, have intensified your work here on the shamanic planes, and prepared you for the deepest level of healing and initiation possible for you at this time. Everybody is in the perfect place for himself or herself, here and now.

To continue your preparation, I suggest making a spirit shield or mandala of your allies, your spirit family. The art of the shield represents the shaman's story, his allies, guides, and purpose between the worlds. The shield is also obviously a sign of protection, but the protection that is granted spiritually, through your own talents and allies, rather than physically, by the structural strength of the shield itself.

The ritual shield is popular in forms of Native American shamanism, but can also be found in European forms. The Celtic warriors were known to carry shields and banners, and their lore and art is rich with mythic and clan symbols. Shields are usually wooden frames with hide stretched over them (Figure 37). You can bend a pliable branch into a loop, and put two more sticks as a cross handle, all bound by a sturdy piece of twine or string. I find that some good glue helps, too. Then take a piece of leather that is larger than your loop, with holes and string through the edge, like you were creating a spirit bag. Wet the hide and stretch it over the loop, pulling the string tight for a good fit. Let it dry in the sun to make sure it is a tight fit. You could create a simple shield without the loop, and just a wooden cross formed from two sticks with a piece of leather with four holes in it. Again, some glue can help keep it in place. If you prefer to not work with any animal hide, you can make variations of this out of canvas, or even make flat, two-dimensional paper shields.

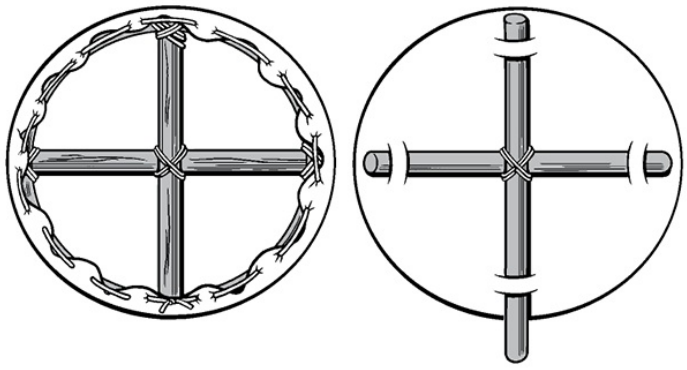
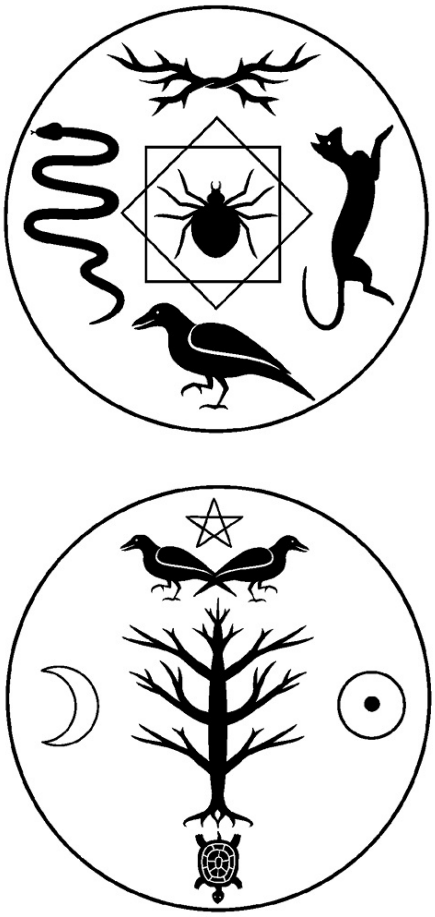


Figure 37: *Building a Shield*

Next, with paint, ink, marker, or crayon, mark your shield with symbols that are appropriate for your journey (Figure 38A and Figure 38B). Use the images of your allies and the images of your past journeys, of what you have learned in this yearlong training. The images can be as simple or as complex as you would like. It's your shield.



Figures 38A and 38B: *Shield Design*

It would be wholly appropriate to sing your spirit song, or create a new one, while crafting your shield. Shield making at this point in your training will have you reviewing all that you have learned and experienced, helping you build your confidence for the task ahead, and reminding you that you will not be alone in your quest.

Unlike the previous two books in the Temple of Witchcraft series, there is no self-test for the third level. This is ultimately not book knowledge, but emotional intelligence, spiritual experience. The test is in the doing, not the memorization. Though witches are scholars, the experiences here—not the words on the page—ultimately inform you. The words are just a road map to get you to

where you need to go.

I have three remaining preparation tools for your shadow initiation.

The first is to do a divination, using any divination system you choose, to determine the best time for your shadow initiation. Traditionally, the full moon, because it heightens emotion, or the new moon, because it embodies the dark mysteries, would be appropriate, but for you, there might be a different and more specific time. You can use tarot, runes, or even the muscle-testing and pendulum techniques from *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.* Many prefer simply to use their year-and-a-day set date, from the start of this course, feeling the fates have already determined the most appropriate time for the journey.

Second, many choose to fast before the initiation. Fasting varies from person to person, depending on your health and constitution. If you have any medical issues, you should consult your doctor, but practitioners have found a juice fast for the day of the ritual very helpful. The Druids reportedly did fasts solely of apples and apple juice to cleanse their systems. Apples are the fruit of the Underworld. Some students have even fasted for three days before the ritual, but people's body constitutions are different, and that might not be right for you. Use common sense and your intuition.

Lastly, think about whether you will be taking a new craft name after this initiation. The significance of magickal names is detailed in chapter 17 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.* Not everybody takes more than one craft name. In this system of five elements, five degrees of training, you might not want five names. It is up to you. In shadow initiation, if a name is needed, a name will be given during the journey itself, as long as you are open to hearing it.

Divine your day, prepare yourself, and then perform this self-initiation ritual. In the end, it is not your own self that will initiate you, but your shadow and the spirits of the Underworld.

Shadow Initiation Ritual

The shadow initiation ritual is the culmination of your year of study. Prepare yourself for the ritual. Set up a shamanic altar with your tools of power. Put out your spirit bag, and place any tools you feel drawn to use on the altar. Put out your power spirit shield. If you are making a belt for the five levels of initiation, have a length of blue cord, for the water element, to match your red cord for

the first degree of fire and your green cord for the second degree of earth. I also suggest using a cauldron to destroy your shadow journal.

Dress in any ritual clothing that empowers you. You can use the hood of a robe or cloak to submerge you in shadow by pulling it over your eyes. You could also choose to go skyclad for this ritual, having no guise between you and the shadow self.

For initiation rituals, some sequester themselves in a dark place, like a cave or the crook of a large tree. Some traditions of witchcraft have been known to use the witch's cradle, inducing a sense of sensory deprivation by tightly wrapping blankets around the body of the witch and suspending the bundle with ropes from poles or tree limbs. This device aids in astral journeying, and looks something like a hammock suspended between two trees. Other traditions place a blanket over the shamanic initiate, like a death shroud, and even weigh it down with rocks at the corners. Voodoo initiations have a special hut or room separated from the rest of the community where an initiate remains until the process is complete, and the community outside prays and emotionally supports the initiate. You don't have to go through the trouble of creating a witch's cradle or any other sensory deprivation device unless you feel called to do so.

Start by thinking about the shadow. What does the shadow mean to you now that you have worked so hard to conjure it up? Review your shadow journal from your distilling experiences. Look over the patterns. See how your lists changed over the course of several weeks. Look to see what remained consistent and what was a thread to something deeper. When you are done, take the pages of the journal, rip them up, and put them in the cauldron. You can destroy the paper either by flooding the cauldron with water, which would be appropriate for the theme of this course, or traditionally by burning the paper. I burn it and then douse the ashes with water. If you are indoors, burning a whole journal could create an overwhelming amount of smoke and set off fire alarms, so be forewarned. If you are outside, though, burning can be a powerful ritual. After reflecting on the shadow and your journal, destroy it.

When ready, create your sacred space. I highly recommend casting a traditional circle for this journey. Play your music or have someone drum for you. It is great to have someone you trust to support you during and after the ritual. Get into your meditative state with the intention of journeying to meet

your shadow. Say:

> *I, [state your name], call upon the Goddess, God, and Great Spirit, all my spirit allies and totems, to aid me in this initiation. I ask to journey to the Underworld to make peace with my shadow, to know and heal our relationship. I ask that this be for my highest good, harming none, with ease, grace, and gentleness. So mote it be.*

Usually the journey will bring you to the Underworld. Some practitioners notice that their guides are conspicuously absent. They are present, but unseen, letting you walk to your shadow on your own. As you descend, you might find yourself facing tests and trials, where you must give up spirit items of power, much like the descent of Inanna, as she was forced to relinquish symbols of her power as payment through the seven gates of the Lower World. You might find yourself seemingly naked and powerless as you face the shadow, and discover that your true power is within.

When you reach your destination in the Underworld, you may experience a variety of things. You will either find your shadow in a reflection, where your shadow self will come out of the reflection, into your world, or you might find your shadow self literally in your shadow, which rises up to greet you. Your shadow self might be several smaller beings, or even one larger being defying conventional description.

Your intention for the journey is simply to meet with your shadow and hopefully make peace with it. You may converse with your shadow, or have a more visceral interaction with it. Your shadow interaction can include experiences with the dark goddesses and gods of the Underworld. Experiencing your fears, anger, jealousies, and shame can occur, as well as eradication of your self-image through a shamanic death experience. In deeper levels of shadow work, you might have the shamanic-initiation experience of dismemberment and resurrection. At this time, at this level, don't seek it out unless this experience comes to you naturally. If it comes, you will be ready for it, even if you don't think you are. As you grow in experience, you can purposely ask for a dismemberment experience from a totem or deity to deepen your understanding and transformation, though it might not be a full divine initiation into the role of the shaman.

Expect the unexpected, including the possibility that it might not be as difficult

as you think. Remember that you have done a lot of healing work to lead up to this experience, and your shadow should not take you by surprise. As you continue to peel the “onion” of your healing, you can have deeper experiences with it, finding a stronger sense of partnership and cooperation, or even incorporation of the shadow into your identity.

When I reached a deep place of shadow identification, the image I perceive as my higher self, a being of bright starlight, and the image I perceived as my shadow, a being of darkness, came together and merged as a being composed of stars and galaxies, like a humanoid nebula, both light and dark.

When you have come to an accord with your shadow, return to the Middle World. Return yourself to normal consciousness. Do the usual clearing, grounding, and closing rituals to return to waking consciousness. Celebrate your newfound empowerment and sense of awareness. Celebrate your healing. Celebrate your shadow. Take your new name, if you desire. Put something special into your witch bag to symbolize your contact with the shadow. I usually give my students a black tekite, a mineral from a meteorite. Its color symbolizes the shadow, and it is very powerful yet alien, much like how we view our shadow. Weave your blue cord into your initiation belt.

Congratulations! You have completed one of the most important steps in the path of the witch—truly facing your shadow. Many avoid this journey with all their power, yet it is necessary, to progress further in your magickal understanding. Only when you know the shadow can you truly love it, in yourself and in all others. Use your shadow self as an ally. Call upon it for help and advice. As you build a relationship with it, you deepen your relationship with yourself, all your allies, and your divine purpose.

My friend David was so excited for the last Witchcraft III class, to face the shadow. Doing a lot of personal work both in the shamanic worlds and in the physical world, through his relationships, he had been facing the shadow quite well. In his Underworld journey from the last lesson, the Underworld gods were not exactly dismembering him in classic shamanic initiation, but reaching into him and pulling out the shadow. One reached through his mouth and pulled out his shadowy guts. He thought the shadow was being banished and removed, while in truth, it was the process of distillation.

When he came to the last class, he thought that by the end of it he would be

rid of all the feelings and emotions of the shadow. During the shadow initiation ritual, he faced his shadow self in a whole form without knowing it was the shadow, at least not initially. The shadow journey consisted of a conversation with a shadow, and a pact being made. David promised not to abandon the shadow, but to work with it, and the shadow promised not to overly influence him or control his reactions, but to allow him to shine. David realized it was not a banishment of the shadow, as he had initially hoped, but a transformation of his relationship with it. His relationship with his shadow was changed forever, but it still involved daily work. It didn't necessarily get easier after the shadow initiation, but his understanding of this relationship became much clearer. The shadow initiation ritual prepared him for a deeper relationship with his shadow, and helped him gain greater insight into his spiritual life. Shadow work prepared him, and many others, for the deeper insights contained in the arts of ceremonial magick and Hermetic Qabalah, which will be covered in the fourth volume of this series, *The Temple of High Witchcraft.*

Stopping Shadow Work Before Your Year and a Day Is Complete

If you decide to start the process of distilling the shadow and then determine that you do not want to see it to completion, you must ritually end the process. Just stopping the process without any closure is like starting surgery and then deciding not to finish it without sewing the body back up. Distilling the shadow is akin to creating a self-inflicted wound to draw out the poisons so the healing can be pure.

When teaching the class based upon this book, I've had a few students determine it was too tough, or their life was too busy, or they got sick in the middle of the process and didn't continue. Such deterrents are the shadow self making its presence known—they are signs that our fears and pains do not want to be healed yet. Illness is a manifestation of our thoughts and emotions, and many students report infections, injuries, and, in particular, flu and respiratory complications during the distilling-the-shadow phase of training. This is part of the purging process and is quite natural.

A few of those who didn't continue class, and ignored my suggestions to ritually end the process and seal up the psychic "opening," found life very, very

difficult for many months afterward. They had a hard time understanding why, because they were choosing to ignore the shadow they had conjured up rather than deal with it on any level. It was like they gave the shadow strength, but didn't make peace with it, or didn't return it to the confines of their unconscious. They simply let it out and ignored it. They opened Pandora's box, quite literally, and then had many difficulties in personal relationships, business, health, and spirituality.

If you determine that this shadow work is too much too soon for you, there is no shame or danger in stopping the process, but the way you stop it is important. Do it safely. Those who have stopped attending class, but followed this process or something like it, have suffered no long-lasting ill effects, and some even felt like they had tackled a small part of their shadow work, making the next attempt a bit easier. You might decide, or your friends, family, counselor, or minister might help you determine, that this is not the time and place for you to do this work. Once you have made that decision, do the following ritual.

Take the shadow journal pages you have done, and place them in a flameproof vessel such as a cauldron. Make sure the cauldron is large enough to hold the paper. You can rip and tear the paper as much as you want. Since you will be burning the paper, and it can create a lot of smoke, do this outside.

Place three candles around the cauldron, in a triangle shape—black to the back and left, to absorb and contain your shadow energies, white to the back and right, to transform and purify, and blue at the point in front, to stabilize your emotions and bring peace. Charge the candles with these intentions, and light them. Then light the cauldron fire and burn the shadow journal. When done and the ashes are cool, scatter them in water. Like any other candle spell, let the candles burn. If you must extinguish them, snuff them and relight them again later, continuing until they are completely burned. The shadow process is now complete, and you can continue onward with your personal path with no ill effects.

The Well of Memories

We are all teachers. We are all students. We all guide each other on the path. One of the techniques I've found so affirming to my desire to build spiritual

community, both physically and astrally, is the use of the well of memories. The well of memories is how it was introduced to me, but you could just as easily know it by other names, such as the Akashic Records, the hall of records, the tree of memory, or the astral library. The name doesn't matter. In scientific terms, I think of it like the consciousness grids that connect the collective information of a species, as discussed in chapter 7 of *The Inner Temple of Witchcraft.* Here we share our knowledge and wealth of experience.

Though technically not necessary since all information and experience is recorded in the well of memory, what I have found is that by going back to the shamanic world, usually the Lower World, and reviewing our training and shadow initiation, and then consciously sharing that experience with others, to feed the tree of the world as it grows, is quite powerful and liberating. I had a teacher who suggested that consciously deciding to share that experience makes it more accessible to all those in the world. As you heal, the world heals. Use your experience so that others can benefit from your work. When you feel settled from your shadow experience, no matter how many days, weeks, or even months you need, take the time to journey with the intention of going to the well of memories, and with the help of your allies, share your experience there.

Walking the Winding Path

Where does the shamanic witch go from here? Though there are not a lot of books and training programs that recognize the shamanic elements of witchcraft, the traditions continue to grow. You will find the shamanic elements at pagan festivals and communities worldwide. As you look back on the mysteries of traditional witchcraft, you will see the shamanic lore intertwined with our rituals and initiations. It was there all the time, but perhaps not as obvious to you. This branch of the witchcraft tree continues to reach outward to the world. You are a part of that growth. You can continue to add to the path. Many celebrations and even traditional covens are adding drumming and shamanic trance work if they did not already include those elements.

Part of the resurrection of witchcraft in the modern era is about making your own traditions. It's the hallmark of the Aquarian Age we are entering. My dear friend and student Claire, who was well versed in Native American traditions

before coming to study Wicca, told me after a witchcraft class that she couldn't mix the two. Wicca was separate and had to be kept pure. Though some Wiccans feel that way, and many Native people feel that way, I feel the essence of modern witchcraft was revived from a number of different sources.

The revival of the shamanic aspects of witchcraft, honoring the Americas, Siberia, and Asia as sources since the shamanic traditions still survive there, is a way of honoring the world tribe. Though it is the job of some people to keep the traditions clear and separate, it is the job of others to find the similarities and cross-cultural themes. We all have a place and function. As an eclectic witch, I believe it is my duty to see the truths in all cultures and bring them together under the craft of the wise. When you do something with reverence, honor, and love, you are not corrupting it or harming it. It is just important to recognize what sources you are drawing from, and honor them. We are all part of the world tribe. I think such synthesis is the only thing that will take us to the next step, the next forms of magick and spirituality in the New Age.

One of the most important things to remember on the path is that the spirits will inform you directly. Think of the first shamans and witches. Who taught them? Who initiated them? Who brought out their talents? It was through direct revelation from the spirit world. By maintaining your connection to your allies, you will develop the new techniques and traditions that are prefect for you, and be guided as to when, where, and with whom you should share them.

The death and rebirth of the shamanic witch changes us forever, and might separate us for a time from other pagans. I associate the maxim "To be silent" with the water point of the Witch's Pyramid, for when we experience the watery resurrection of the self, words may fail to explain the meaning behind the experience. We simply have an intuitive understanding with those who have been there and come back. But silence also stands for the shadow, for it is only in our quiet reflections that we can find the shadow and work with it. With peace, we no longer hear the constant voices of our inner fears, anger, jealousies, and shame. We live freely, for there is strength in silence.

Ultimately, the winding road of the shamanic witch is between the worlds, one foot on each side of the veil. Only by being a bridge, a partner, between the two sides will we find the magick of the next age, and bring the healing that will revitalize ourselves, our people, and the world.

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